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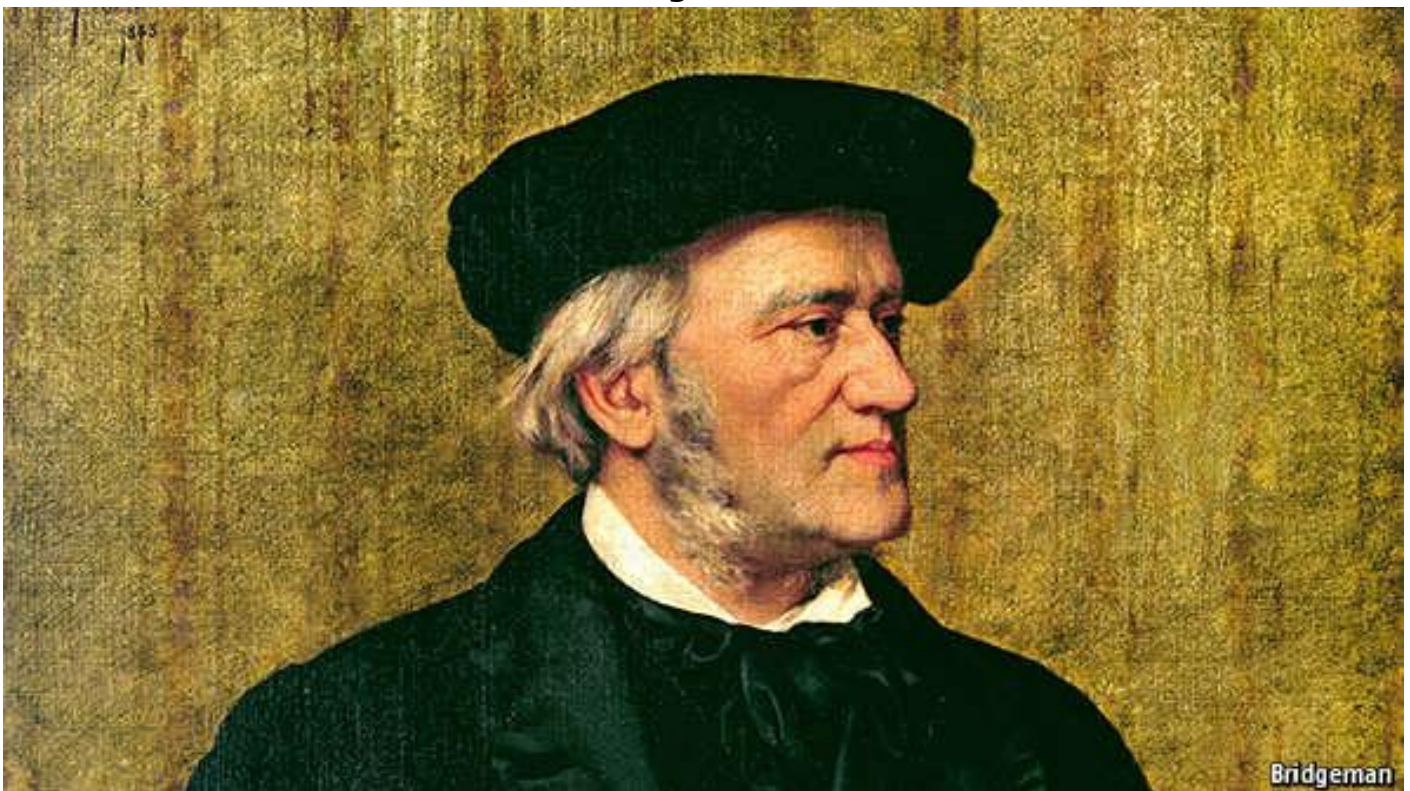
"I can't play or conduct a six-four chord to make it sound either anti-Semitic or pro-Semitic, fascist, or socialist or capitalist." - Christian Thielemann

Richard Wagner

Taskmaster

A popular carrier of the Wagner banner

15 August 2015



My Life with Wagner

By Christian Thielemann.

Translated by Anthea Bell. *Weidenfeld & Nicolson*; 267 pages; £25.

CHRISTIAN THIELEMANN has risen fast through the ranks of orchestral conductors, although not quite as quickly as he might have wished. He wanted to be the first German artistic director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra since Wilhelm Furtwängler 61 years ago, but the Berlin musicians chose Kirill Petrenko, a Russian rival, instead. He has, however, received an agreeable consolation prize. He is to become only the second music director of the Bayreuth festival drawn from outside the Wagner family. (Furtwängler was the first in 1930, but he lasted only a year.)

Mr Thielemann will be happy in Bayreuth, where Richard Wagner—"The Master"—is beyond criticism. His book is an act of homage, part revealing autobiography ("Wagner confronted me with myself...not always [an] undiluted pleasure") and part informative guide to the Wagner oeuvre, describing the plots and performances of all the operas, with discography thrown in. His favourites are "Tristan und Isolde" and "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg". His enthusiasm breathes life into them.

For 41 years until 2008, the festival was run by Wagner's grandson, Wolfgang, an irascible Bavarian who inherited Richard's autocratic style, and excluded from the Festspielhaus all members of the family except his wife and daughter, and, reluctantly, his daughter from his first marriage, Eva Wagner-Pasquier. But he gave the young Mr Thielemann work, and stuck with him as he learned his trade as a Wagner conductor. Wolfgang had few friends, but Mr Thielemann was one of the best of them. The only thing he could not stand was Wolfgang's love of sausage salad.

Mr Thielemann was born in Berlin in 1959, the son of music-loving parents in a politically conservative home. He was listening to Berlin Philharmonic concerts at the age of five; as a teenager he had no interests outside music. He knew what he wanted—he was going to be an orchestral conductor. The right-wing politics of his home live on in his recent sympathy for Pegida, Germany's anti-Islamic movement (which may well be one reason why he did not get the top job in Berlin).

He is fierce about the separation of music and ideology. He writes:

"I can't play or conduct a six-four chord to make it sound either anti-Semitic or pro-Semitic, fascist, or socialist or capitalist."

His judgments are uniformly single-minded: he thinks only German-speakers can conduct Wagner, and that opera directors who go against the spirit of the music are unconscionable.

Bayreuth is famous for the braying violence of its first-night audience, but there were few boos to be heard after Mr Thielemann's debut as music director last month, with a new production of "Tristan", directed by Wolfgang's daughter Katharina. Both conductor and orchestra got excellent reviews. Mr Thielemann certainly has the Wagner virus: a hopeless addiction to the master's music. If conducting Wagner's great operas of love and death, such as "Tristan", he gets lost in "a psychedelic state of intoxication" and takes days to recover, then Bayreuth will be his drug den.

<http://www.economist.com/news/booksandarts/21660948-popular-carrier-wagner-banner-taskmaster>

On the Future of Wagnerism: Do New Revelations About Hitler's Taste in Art Cast New Light on Wagner Appreciation? Lawrence D. Mass, M.D.

Posted: 02/18/2014 2:20 pm EST



Widely regarded as one of history's greatest composers and artists, Richard Wagner is also widely known as one of history's most virulent anti-Semites. Like most opera lovers, I fell in love with Wagner. Yet my memoir, *Confessions of a Jewish Wagnerite: Being Gay*

and Jewish in America, with an introduction by Gottfried Wagner, great-grandson of the composer, is the story of my own personal journey away from that love, and away from identifying myself as a Wagnerite.

As the AIDS epidemic began to unfold in 1981, I began to confront mortality as never before -- as a physician, as a writer, as a gay man, and as a Jew. At that time I had 5 pictures of Wagner on my living room wall, one of them a drawing by me. Not so coincidentally I began to come to grips with the extent of my own internalization of anti-Semitism, an odyssey of self-discovery that paralleled the great theme of my life up to that point, of coming out and into my own as a gay man. Slowly and painfully, I came to grips with the depth and seriousness of Wagner's anti-Semitism and its entanglements with what became Nazism. Past all the rationalizations commonly expounded by Wagnerites, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, I finally began to see that being a "Wagnerite," and especially a Jewish Wagnerite, was psychologically and morally troubled.

What's to be done about someone whose art is or seems to be so great, but whose prejudices were unquestionably contributory to great evil? How do you continue to appreciate art once aware of the enormity it was accessory to? This is the ring of fire that continues to surround composer Richard Wagner.



To judge from the way the still scorching controversies regarding Wagner and Wagner appreciation are playing out in our own time, there are several key strategies. First and foremost is to further extol the composer's art by finding ever new approaches and contexts of interpretation, the way we do with such other great artists as Sophocles and Shakespeare. Within this strategy of exhaustive reinterpretation is that of exploiting the passage of time and the receding of history. Still another, apposing strategy is to come clean about the seriousness and reach of the anti-Semitism, a process that has gained momentum in recent research and publications. Finally, there is the effort to humanize the composer by noting exceptions and contradictions in his biases, complexity in his rendering of villains and heroes alike, and examples of diversity in his circles, including a number of Jews and other non-Aryans. Between the lines of all these approaches is invariably a discernible longing if not impatience to get past...well, the past.

All of these strategies have been working together to further place the composer in perspective, a much larger process that, like all history, will continue to reconfigure over time. Today we can appreciate Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities, even the Roman Coliseum or a southern plantation, without having that appreciation entirely vitiated by our knowledge of the atrocities of slavery and oppression that produced them and which they produced. Something comparable is happening with Wagner appreciation. It's anticipated that the controversies will eventually weaken and die, leaving just the art in their wake. The bathwater will finally get thrown out, the baby saved. This is the view that is almost universally shared by our arbiters of culture, whatever the intellectual acrobatics, re the present and future of Richard Wagner.

As we look to the future of Wagner and Wagnerism, the ill-defined cult of the composer that has no counterpart in all of music (there is no Beethovenism, Verdiism, Mozartism), we might consider the commentary of *New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross, an ardent Wagnerite who feels that pondering the Hitler connection with Wagner has gone too far. As he observed of his experience of the 2013 Wagner bicentennial Bayreuth Festival, "discussion of Wagner is stuck in a Nazi rut. His multifarious

influence on artistic, intellectual, and political life has been largely forgotten; in the media, it is practically obligatory to identify him as 'Hitler's favorite composer.'" Ross looks forward to the time when we can get past the Wagner/Hitler detour and back onto the greater journey of Wagner appreciation.

Meanwhile, scholarship keeps casting new light on the composer. With the opening of previously inaccessible Bayreuth and other archives, there are ever-accumulating revelations of the already heavily documented relationships among Nazism, the Wagners and Bayreuth, and new insights on Hitler's reverence for Wagner. Alex Ross has been researching this material in preparation for a book, *Wagner: Art in the Shadow of Music*, that can be expected to try to distance the composer from Hitler. Why should one arch-criminal's appreciation of Wagner, which was--at least as Ross tries so hard to see it -- delimited and superficial, ruin everybody else's appreciation forever?

In July of 2013, Ross published an essay called "Othello's Daughter" in the *New Yorker* about a mixed race singer who studied with Wagner's widow, fiercely anti-Semitic Cosima Wagner, and who had been slated to be one of the Valkyries in Bayreuth's first fully staged *Ring* cycle. Ross understands the seriousness of Wagner's racism and anti-Semitism. In an earlier *New Yorker* piece, "Wagner in Israel," he wrote what seemed a sensitive and insightful analysis, reminding us, among other twists and turns in the Wagner-and-the-Jews saga, that Theodore Herzl, founding father of the state of Israel, loved Wagner. Yet even as Ross notes the naivete of not exculpating so great a prejudice as racism and Wagner's role in it on the basis of a few exceptions, he appears to be a lot more seduced by "Othello's Daughter" and other such exceptions than he realizes. Much the way I myself, alongside virtually every Jewish and for that matter non-Jewish Wagnerite of my knowledge and acquaintance, have seized on comparable tidbits to redeem Wagner from the curse of Hitler and Nazism.

One of which, luring me presently like the *Blumenmadchen* in *Parsifal* from my Wagnerism apostasy, is the degree to which the composer seemed to foretell of his own fate. In the face of what appears at least for now to be an eternal curse with no way out, Wagner himself can be evermore clearly seen in such Wandering Jew-ish figures as The Flying Dutchman, The Wanderer and Kundry.

"The endless Nazi fixation is unsettling," Ross writes. "Hitler has won a posthumous victory in seeing his idea of Wagner become the defining one." Ross is so impatient with all this that he neglects to mention the special exhibit mounted at Bayreuth in 2012 and during the 2013 bicentennial festival called "Silenced Voices" (covered by Zachary Woolfe in the *New York Times*), commemorating the Wagner-and Bayreuth-associated Jewish musicians and singers, most of whom were murdered as a result of Bayreuth's collaborations with Hitler. Apparently more in keeping with the idea of celebrating the composer's bicentennial, Ross explored Wagner's writings on America, where the composer once considered moving, and Wagner landmarks in New York City and environs.

So henceforth we should be thinking of Wagner, like the Jews, as a victim of Hitler? What I came to see is that while there are some-of-his-close-associates-were-Jews

puzzle pieces that don't fit neatly, the bigger picture is still strong and clear. Hitler really did understand Wagner and that understanding became the philosophical and spiritual basis of what became, under Hitler, Nazism. If Hitler happened to be an aesthetic peasant and vulgarian, his love of Wagner was certainly not regarded as such by most Wagner family members or many other notable Germans as being superficial, naive, delimited, even if that's what some really thought and a few brave artists and others gave voice to. On the contrary, as the Wagners -- especially Winifred (who married into the Wagner family) and with the notable exception of Friedelind (who fled Germany) -- and Bayreuth came to see it, Hitler was the culmination, the realization, of Wagner's *Weltanschauung*.

Meanwhile, new revelations about Hitler's art collections coincidentally invite a revisiting of Hitler's infatuation with Wagner. As it turns out, Hitler, whose favorite composer and sole acknowledged spiritual mentor was Wagner, was an even bigger fan of kitsch, of sentimentality and vulgarity in art, than anything we had already surmised. (See "Reading The Pictures: Fact is, We Can't Get Enough of Hitler," by Michael Shaw, HuffPost, Politics, 11/8/2013).

All of which suggests a different direction of inquiry than that being pursued by Ross and virtually all other Wagnerites. What if Hitler's appreciation of art and taste in art, including Wagner, is more clue than aberration? In other words, when all is said and done, as the long-silenced criticisms of Wagner's music dramas for being coarse, ponderous, pompous and bombastic begin to be reconsidered, is it possible that Wagner's art is really something closer to grandiloquent kitsch than classical Greek antiquity or Shakespeare? That Wagner might eventually be perceived as less rather than more of an artist seems to be an outcome that pretty much no one since Eduard Hanslick, the Jewish critic of Wagner so retaliatorily caricatured by Wagner in *Die Meistersinger*, has thought much about, much less dared to propose, certainly not in the current era of Wagner and Wagnerism.



As is clear from the example of Alex Ross, Wagner appreciation and with it Wagnerism will almost certainly continue its march forward. Eventually, Wagner's art will seem less and less tainted by anti-Semitism, its greatness unfettered by temporal and topical political considerations, distractions, detours, ruts. When appreciating Greek tragedy, how much do we now care about the wars and politics that cradled it? The same fate will almost certainly await Wagner, right? The only

remaining question, certainly for Wagnerites, would seem to be how quickly can we get there.

Or is another outcome also possible? As time and Wagnerism solidify onward, can it be that Wagner's art might seem less like that of the great Greek tragedians or Shakespeare and more like the pictures and statues of *Schwarzwald* moose that are emblematic centerpieces of Hitler's art collections and taste in art?

And if so, can such a dethroning of Wagner be key to understanding Bayreuth's bicentennial *Ring* cycle production directed by iconoclast and "cultural terrorist" Frank Castorf, whose zeal in confounding preconceptions and expectations, in thwarting meaning and interpretation, seemed to have reached new heights of irreverence? "If the composer's great-granddaughters cannot guard Wagner's physical or artistic legacy, why are they in charge of the festival?" asked Neil Fisher in the *London Times*. Could no less than the heart and soul of Wagner appreciation, Bayreuth itself and the Wagner family, be setting the stage and direction for a more anarchic anti-future of Wagner appreciation?

And if so, finally, is such a "*das Ende*" not what Wagner himself foresaw and in the deepest sense accepted and even longed for?



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http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lawrence-d-mass-md/on-the-future-of-wagneris_b_4723285.html

On the Future of Wagnerism, Part 2: Jewish Wagnerites and Wagner Societies

Posted: 04/29/2014 11:30 am EDT

Part 1 of "On The Future of Wagnerism" explored the implications for Wagner appreciation of emerging revelations about Hitler's taste in art. It also considered the related question of whether Wagner is "stuck in a Nazi rut," as *New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross put it. Ross doubtless speaks for many Wagnerites who have

grown impatient with what they feel to be the exhausted and myopic discussion of Wagner's links to Hitler and Nazism at the expense of Wagner appreciation, especially as we mark the bicentennial of the composer's birth. What will be Wagner's place in the next century? Part 1 sees two trends. The first is an inevitable receding of the Hitler-Wagner connection, as time and history move on. Just as we no longer concern ourselves with the wars and politics and biases that cradled the Greek tragedies, presumably we will care less and less about those that nurtured Wagner. The bathwater of Hitler and Nazism will eventually get thrown out, the baby of Wagner's art saved. The countervailing trend suggests that the ongoing fallout from Wagner's epochal anti-Semitism, Hitler's adoration of Wagner and Bayreuth's enthusiastic collaborations with Hitler and Nazism will continue to lead to a less exalted, more qualified place for the composer in the annals of art.

"Fifty years after the demise of the Third Reich, it is incomprehensible that intelligent people still deny the obvious truth that if the *New Testament* of the Nazi political and religious cult was *Mein Kampf*, the *Old Testament* was the work of Richard Wagner." That's how Gottfried Wagner (the composer's great grandson), playwright William M. Hoffman and composer John Corigliano (co-creators of *The Ghosts of Versailles*), composer Michael Shapiro and I put it in a published letter to the editor of the *New York Times* in 1998, in response to a *New York Times* piece, "The Specter of Hitler in the Music of Wagner," by music critic and historian Joseph Horowitz. Reviewing Germanic studies professor Marc Weiner's *Wagner and The Anti-Semitic Imagination*, which shows how Wagner's texts and music are riddled with anti-Semitic allusions, Horowitz wrote in what's now a long-established tradition of Wagnerites -- many of them, like Horowitz, impressively learned and accomplished, and a striking number of them Jewish -- whose willingness and often enough eagerness to rationalize, minimize, obfuscate and deny the presence and toxicity of Wagner's anti-Semitism can strain credulity.

Wagner and Me is a recent documentary created by and featuring the wonderful actor and brave gay activist Stephen Fry, a Jewish Wagnerite who claims his Jewish identity while making an admirable but not very in-depth effort to face some of the history and truth about Bayreuth, Wagner and Wagner's operas, as he tours the Wagner Festival's grounds. Like Horowitz, Fry acknowledges Wagner's anti-Semitism and Bayreuth's Nazi history. In his tone and body language in the film, Fry elicits the kind of surpassing forgiveness and trust, a feeling of comfort, of being at home, that the Jews of Wagner's circle who so revered the composer must have felt, notwithstanding the abundance of evidence to the contrary around and about them. It's the same feeling of comfort and trust you sense in the Wagnerism of Joseph Horowitz.

Surely so supreme an artist as Wagner simply must be surpassingly worthy of trust. Therefore, so this logic goes, trust not what Wagner ranted in treatises and journals and letters, or undeniably depicted in his music and texts, but what's otherwise intuitable, however inchoately, in the interstices of his art, especially in what Horowitz and others see as the complexity, empathy and ambiguity of his characterizations of villains and heroes

alike. In this view, Wotan, Siegfried, Alberich and Mime, like Amfortas, Parsifal, Klingsor and Kundry, exist in a kind of musico-dramatic ether of human, moral and characterological equipoise. However villainous Alberich, Mime and Kundry may really be, they are more recognizably human and capable of arousing levels of compassion denied the too often insufferably virtuous Siegfried and Parsifal. That this is precisely Wagner's point about the Jews -- that they can appeal in ways that mask their reality, and that those who perceive and act on that awareness can seem comparatively smug and self-righteous -- seems ever to elude Wagnerites.

I, too, always knew about Wagner's anti-Semitism and Bayreuth's Nazi history. Notwithstanding that knowledge, I embraced that same deep feeling of trust, that comfort of *heimat* within the universe of Wagner's art, which held me bewitched for much of my younger opera-going life. We Wagnerites all, non-Jewish and Jewish alike, became Kundrys under the spell of "the sorcerer of Bayreuth." Wagner, "the master of Bayreuth," was the master of our senses at the price of our souls. We had no idea how far we had wandered into the realms of and how complicit we had become with racist, nationalist and anti-Semitic agendas.

Fast forward to a generation later, when Ned Rorem, never a Wagnerite, tried to bring me to my senses, to get me to see what we Wagnerites never could, no matter what kind of lip service we gave to critical and qualifying views of Wagner, no matter how hard we tried: that greatness of the art does not mean greatness -- nobility, humanity, character -- of the artist. That greatness of art equals greatness of heart is an equation that turns out to be no more true for composers than for train conductors.

Most notable of recent contributions to this discourse is a documentary film, *Wagner's Jews*, created by Hilan Warshaw, a filmmaker, writer and musician, which documents the remarkable extent and complexity of the social and psychological sadomasochism of Wagner's relationships with a number of Jews. In the process, it documents with singular clarity and accessibility the depth, seriousness and progression of Wagner's anti-Semitism. Warshaw's film features commentary from a number of prominent Jewish musicians and writers, including Leon Botstein, Paul Lawrence Rose and Robert Gutman. So effective is Warshaw's exposure of the psychosocial masochism of Jews in their relations with Wagner that it's impossible not to consider parallels with the most infamous of such behaviors -- the Jewish *kapos* and *Judenrate* in their relationships with the Nazis. With great respect for the impossible circumstances and choices forced upon these Jews by the Nazis, and notwithstanding Alex Ross's wishful certainty that the Nazis paid no attention to and couldn't have cared less about Wagner, when the Nazis were looking for tutorials of how to exploit the psychology of the vulnerability and self-effacement of Jews -- what we more commonly refer to as the internalization of anti-Semitism -- they would have found no greater or more sophisticated an exemplar than Richard Wagner.

Not interviewed in Warshaw's film is Daniel Barenboim, a Jewish Wagnerite who fits right into this discussion. (Scheduling conflicts prevented Barenboim's participation in the film.) Barenboim, whose humanitarian efforts to work with Palestinian musicians are widely lauded, is the

author of a recent essay, "Wagner and the Jews," in the *New York Review of Books*, which shows that the distinguished Israeli conductor and pianist still clings to the Wagnerite and especially Jewish Wagnerite delusion that Wagner's admittedly extreme anti-Semitism does not infect his music or operas, their meaning or appreciation. The art, Barenboim keeps trying to believe and insist, is independent of the man. In their public conversation together at Columbia, no matter how hard the eminent Palestinian intellectual and literary theorist Edward Said tried to get his friend Barenboim to acknowledge the obvious taint of anti-Semitism in Wagner's works, the conductor would not budge.

To my knowledge, no conductor of international renown has refused to conduct Wagner. Some, however, have refused to conduct at Bayreuth, most famously Toscanini during WWII and Leonard Bernstein in the postwar period. Bernstein had been in correspondence with Wolfgang Wagner (Wagner's grandson, Gottfried's father and, together with his brother Wieland, a Nazi collaborator) about leading a new production of *Tristan und Isolde* there. *Tristan*, Bernstein felt, was free of the anti-Semitism that infected most of the other works. Ostensibly, these negotiations fell through because of scheduling conflicts, but I was acquainted with Bernstein during that period and, as I recall and as likewise alluded to by Gottfried Wagner in his memoir, *Twilight of the Wagners*, the main problem was the inadequately addressed Nazi past of Wolfgang Wagner and Bayreuth. Although Bernstein, wildly popular in Germany and Austria, often conducted orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic and in venues where questions of Nazi collaboration remained similarly inadequately addressed, Bayreuth seemed to represent a higher level of challenge in confronting this history.

Like Barenboim, James Levine is another leading Jewish conductor who accepted Bayreuth's invitations to conduct there. Unlike Barenboim, however, Levine, who rarely gives interviews, shies away from discussion of social and political issues, concerns, causes. In the heyday of AIDS and gay liberation, Levine worked with prominent artists known to be gay such as John Corigliano and William M. Hoffman, and he co-conducted a gala benefit concert for Gay Men's Health Crisis. But his public silence about gay liberation, gays in music, and gays in Russia is the *doppelgänger* of his public silence about anti-Semitism, Jews in music, Wagner, Bayreuth and Wagnerism. After many decades in the spotlight, it's clear that Levine is not an avid or gifted public speaker, and he now struggles with considerable health challenges. Even so, it's disappointing and also sad that so outstanding and important an American musician and cultural figure, whose grandfather was a synagogue cantor, has never found a way to express himself publicly regarding these controversies, especially as they might relate to his own experience, identities and feelings.

Perhaps all Jewish Wagnerites appreciate that at some level they must accede to Wagner since his reign over the worlds of music, art and culture, however clamorous, has never been toppled, not even in the wake of Hitler and Nazism. On the contrary, proving the PR maxim that there is no such thing as bad publicity, Wagnerism seems if anything to feed on these controversies. Rationalizing, mitigating, denying and compromising with Wagner's ever-present anti-Semitism -- whether vehemently

explicit or vehemently implicit (As Alex Ross seems eager to point out, Wagner doesn't explicitly defame the Jews as Jews in his operas) -- allows Jews to continue to participate freely and fully in all levels of art and what is still widely regarded, certainly by Wagnerites, as the highest experience of art, Wagner appreciation.

The alternative would be a huge mess. Imagine leading conductors, singers and directors refusing to perform Wagner or audience cohorts refusing to attend Wagner performances. Imagine a larger scale of what happened in Israel with the banning of Wagner, or of the more recent debacle in Los Angeles, where some patrons tried unsuccessfully to prevent a mounting of the *Ring* cycle by the Los Angeles Opera. Such is Wagner's hold that if and when a choice is forced between Wagner and Jewish sensitivities, Wagner invariably will be chosen, a reality that is emergent even in Israel. More unconsciously and instinctively than clearly and honestly, probably the majority of Jews in music and art and culture appreciate this reality and continue to do all they can to prevent such confrontations, to defend themselves psychologically as well as socially and professionally. Hence Jewish Wagnerites as we mostly see them today. They're like black or gay Republicans, gay Catholics, gay or female Islamists, or Jewish Marxists, incongruously supporting individuals and institutions that are significantly inimical to them, with a logic and intellectualism that can be breathtakingly circuitous and an enthusiasm that can appear outsized and troubled.

Jews need Wagner in order to be fully integrated into the music and arts communities, much as Mahler needed to convert to Catholicism for the same reasons, and much as Wagner needed Jews to build his career at multiple levels. But parity this is not. It's crucial to distinguish here between Wagner, who genocidally hated Jews, and Jewish Wagnerites, who unwaveringly adored and worshiped Wagner the vanguard artist. An additional perspective about this emerges from the work of Hilan Warshaw, who captures in his paper, "No One Can Serve Our Cause Better Than You: Wagner's Jewish Collaborators After 1869," Wagner's sense of Jews as crucial to the vision and execution of his artistic vision. Avid Jewish participation in the building and execution of that vision is seen as a proof of its rightness and provides a level of satisfaction that is mostly tacit and paraconscious. Inevitably, it's the same satisfaction that the Nazis took in the "enthusiastic" participation of Jewish elders and councils in the process of Jews for plunder, slavery and extermination. In this perspective, what Jewish Wagnerites like Joseph Horowitz glean to be the composer's ostensibly transcendent musical-dramatic insight into himself and others, the villains as well as the heroes, the real Wagner that emerges is not Shakespeare, whose anti-Semitic creation Shylock was pointed enough to be exploited by the Nazis, but the Nazi propaganda creations *Ewige Jude* and *Jud Suss*.

What Shakespeare achieved with the otherwise dramatic and powerful character of Shylock and the tragicomic ambiguity of *The Merchant of Venice* is what Wagnerites like Horowitz want to believe Wagner achieved with Alberich, Mime, Beckmesser, Klingsor and Kundry in the *Ring* cycle, *Die Meistersinger*, and *Parsifal*. But so far as we know, Shakespeare was no more personally or dramatically invested in anti-Semitism in *The Merchant of Venice* than he was in racism in *Othello*. Nothing

remotely comparable can be claimed for Wagner, who was in an entirely different universe of racist, nationalist and anti-Semitic agendas.

When I was writing my memoir, *Confessions of a Jewish Wagnerite*, I met one-on-one with Horowitz, who tried to make the case for Wagner's anti-Semitism being of its time and place and therefore to some extent understandable and forgivable. In addition, there was the implication that some of Wagner's stereotyping may have had more of a basis than Wagner's critics have allowed, which doubtless explains what Gustav Mahler, perhaps the most famous Jewish Wagnerite, was trying to say in comparing himself to Mime. In other words, as a number of Jewish Wagnerites who should know better have seen it, Wagner's anti-Semitism should be regarded as to a degree accurate and justified. As we now know, such thinking was all too typical among the German Jews who were transported to the camps in the same train cars as their social inferiors, still secretly priding themselves on not being "one of *those* people."

There is another analogy to the Wagner and the Jews situation, one closer to home here in America and parallel in time to the life of Wagner and the inception of Wagnerism -- the slavemasters and slaves of the pre Civil War American South. In the *New York Times*, music critic Zachary Woolfe pondered the connections between the film "Django" with Wagner and the *Ring* cycle, allusions to which color Quentin Tarantino's highly acclaimed film. There, Woolfe finds as many implications as there are twists and turns in the director's use and mischievously irreverent misuse of Wagner: "What we are required to do is to remain aware, as Mr. Tarantino's film perhaps inadvertently reminds us, that Wagner's operas do not exist outside history or politics."

"Robert Lepage's production of the *Ring* cycle is proudly apolitical," Woolfe observes, "but when it returns to the Metropolitan Opera...audiences will ideally have 'Django' in the back of their minds..." And likewise ideally, they will further consider that whatever *Gone With The Wind* moments of seemingly benign, mutually supportive relationships between Wagner and his Jewish disciples may have existed at Wahnfried, the Wagner equivalent of Tara (e.g., between Wagner and Hermann Levi, who conducted the world premiere of *Parsifal* and was a pall-bearer at Wagner's funeral in Venice), it's not Cap'n Butler and Mammy so much as the slavemasters of "Django" and "12 Years a Slave" that most successfully convey the psychological and philosophical atmosphere of The Master of Bayreuth's relationships to his Jews.

Meanwhile, is it unreasonable to probe deeper than we have beneath the rock we call Wagnerism? Is there a Bachism, Beethovenism or Mozartism? Is it like "gay sensibility," a phenomenon we know exists but which eludes precision and certainty of definition? Is it a philosophy, movement, religion? Or is it a cult? Apart from the issue of the relationship between Wagner societies, Bayreuth and the Wagner family (lest we forget, Wagner continues to be a family business), and apart from their history, which goes back to the first Bayreuth festivals, Wagnerism is a sociocultural phenomenon that begs for greater critical scrutiny. In his book, *Wagner Nights*, about the history of Wagnerism in America at the turn of the century, Joseph Horowitz gives a sense of the scale of this phenomenon that was unique in legitimizing, however indirectly or

tacitly under the mantle of high art, the contemplation and appreciation of indubitably racist and anti-Semitic perspectives in a country where racism and anti-Semitism, though not so extreme as they became in Europe, were nonetheless endemic and pervasive. At that time in America, there were quotas for Jews at the leading universities, including Harvard and Yale, and Jews were widely excluded from clubs, apartment buildings, neighborhoods and jobs; and segregation was the law of the land.

But that's not what Horowitz finds. Rather, he mostly writes about what a meliorist social movement Wagnerism was, how it was for a time dominated by women, giving them a place and voice they did not otherwise have. Not surprisingly in Horowitz's account, anti-Semitism does not seem a notable aspect of Wagnerism, at least not consciously or explicitly in those years in America, in contrast to what happened to Wagnerism over the ensuing decades in Europe. Alas, there is no major, comprehensive study of Wagnerism to help place Horowitz's work in greater perspective.

On the surface, today's Wagner societies seem fully open to discussion of controversy. Critical inquiry is welcome, including discussion of Wagner's anti-Semitism. Jews are invited to participate, to play the same prominent roles in promoting Wagner's legacy that we played in Wagner's own life and career, especially when that participation, however critical on this point or that, is discernibly enthusiastic, as it so unwaveringly is. All the world's Wagner societies include Jews, who are sometimes presidents of these organizations. There is even an Israeli Wagner society. But let that participation strike the wrong chord and a different kind of reception may result. When it was published, *Confessions of a Jewish Wagnerite*, with its introduction by Gottfried Wagner, was banned from the literature table of the Wagner Society of New York by its President Forever, Nathalie D. Wagner, apparently by fiat. (Has the Wagner Society of New York ever held an election?) The reaction of Wagner societies to Gottfried Wagner has been comparably frosty. Why are these books so threatening?

Confessions of a Jewish Wagnerite is a personal memoir of my recognition of the psychological and moral troubledness of my own Wagnerism, bound up, as I discovered it to be, with my own internalized anti-Semitism, within greater concerns about the cult of Wagner and its influence on culture, society and politics. Gottfried Wagner's memoir, *Twilight of The Wagners*, shares those concerns as it takes an unflinchingly hard look at the already heavily but still far from adequately addressed Nazi history of Bayreuth and his family's, especially his never repentant father Wolfgang Wagner's, collaborations with Nazism. (Some of this family discord is also captured in the Tony Palmer film, *The Wagner Family*.)

Admittedly, these memoirs tell of movement away from the composer. And their threat may be that as such, they are just too undermining of Wagner and inimical to Wagnerism, which is inevitably about Wagner appreciation.

Meanwhile, one can't help but wonder to what extent Jewish as well as non-Jewish Wagnerites are experiencing the same satisfaction, albeit a lot more tacitly and preconsciously, that Richard and Cosima Wagner clearly savored in witnessing such enthusiastic

Jewish participation in the promotion of Wagnerism. Like Alberich, Mime and the Nibelungs, as Wagner saw us, we never miss an opportunity to exploit and betray one another. In any event, I wouldn't anticipate finding much discussion of such things at Wagner Society gatherings, even those that are currently hosting screenings of *Wagner's Jews*.

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http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lawrencedmassmd/post-7208_b_5042684.html

On the Future of Wagnerism, Part 3: Beckmesser, Kissinger and the *Klinghoffer* Controversy Posted: 07/18/2014 8:27 am EDT



Richard Wagner

Playing out before us is the Wagner situation redux. In anticipation of the Metropolitan Opera's new production of *The Death of Klinghoffer*, a co-creation of composer John Adams, librettist Alice Goodman and director Peter Sellars, Jewish individuals and groups are once again expressing concerns about the perceived anti-Semitic implications and the potential to stoke anti-Semitism of the opera, which has aroused strong reactions from all sides since its world premiere in Brussels in 1991. Artistic freedom defenders and partisans of *Klinghoffer* are once again indignant about any proposed accommodations of those concerns as well as about the concerns themselves. Because of my writing about the enduring toxicity of Wagner's anti-Semitism, it might be inferred that I would support the Met's decision not to broadcast *Klinghoffer* on its Live from the Met HD series. While I do sometimes question decisions about

the status of Wagner in the repertoire and share Jewish concerns about *Klinghoffer*, let me be clear that I do not believe that any composer or work of art or staging should be censored or banned.

But just as I do not want or expect Wagner to be banned or censored, I do not want discussion of the ongoing fallout from the depth and seriousness of Wagner's anti-Semitism to be bullied into submission or silence. Though I support his right to say it, I don't want to be told that Wagner is "stuck in a Nazi rut," as *New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross observed, with the implication that any further discussion of the Wagner-Hitler connection is now officially exhausted, inappropriate and unwelcome. I do not want to be told implicitly what my life-partner Arnie Kantrowitz was told explicitly by his close boyhood friend when Arnie asked him if Wagner's art was more important than the lives of 6 million Jews: "Yes."

The same holds true for *Klinghoffer* and its creators. Having made the questionable, controversial decision to stage it, the Met should not now be having eleventh-hour misgivings about the broadcasting of it, even though concerns about it playing into escalating anti-Semitism in Europe and elsewhere seem justified. Consider Graham Vick's production of *Moses in Egypt*, a long-neglected Rossini masterpiece, for the Rossini Festival in Pesaro (Rossini's home town) in 2011, the video of which was released in 2013. In a staging that sounds more like a satire of the whole "Eurotrash" era of deconstructing opera than any truth it might touch on, Vick, an epigone of Sellars, turned the Jews into the terrorists. The Egyptians became their Palestinian victims and Moses was made to resemble Osama bin Laden. Although such a staging might not be expected to play well in New York, it garnered plenty of attention and praise during its run in Europe, receiving one of Italy's most prestigious critics' awards. In "Using Minds To Poison Opera Against Israel," Myron Kaplan draws the unavoidable conclusion in *The Jewish Voice* that "The production, a huge success in Europe, is meant to indoctrinate people with the idea that Israel is the villain in its conflict with the Palestinian Arabs."

So what are the issues here? In order to appreciate the problem with *Klinghoffer*, we have to go back to *Nixon in China*, an earlier co-creation of Adams, Sellars and Goodman. It has been a tenet of Goodman's work, as she herself has repeatedly tried to characterize it, to give balance and dimension to the various protagonists and cohorts, to allow them to express themselves, to give voice to their inner thoughts and feelings. Thus Mao, one of history's greatest mass-murderers (some would rank his democide as the greatest in human history), is humanized in her libretto for *Nixon in China*. Likewise Nixon, Pat Nixon, Chou en Lai and even Madame Mao, whose portrait is not flattering but who has the opera's most thrilling music. What Goodman says is her intention to be fair is indeed apparent almost everywhere, at least on the surface, and this is likewise true of *Klinghoffer*, however one might question her claim to a balanced portrayal of the plight of the Palestinians vs. the Jews and Israelis. Of course, this ostensible balance and fairness of Goodman's libretto is apart from the questions Richard Taruskin has raised in *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* re Adams' musical characterizations favoring the Palestinians.

Goodman's professed balance calls attention to itself at every turn, but with one very big exception: the portrayal of Henry Kissinger in *Nixon in China*. There isn't a moment of his role that is anything less than a vicious and gratuitous caricature. Goodman's--and with her's, Sellars' and Adams'--hostility towards this character begs for greater scrutiny than it got from our critics, although a number of them did note that Kissinger was singularly pilloried.

Reviewing the opera's landing at the Metropolitan Opera in 2011, Anthony Tommasini observed in the *New York Times* that "With the exception of Henry Kissinger, all the historic players in the drama are treated seriously and given a dignity that allows for plenty of humor and absurdity...I have never understood why the Kissinger character alone is turned into a caricature." In *Opera and Medicine*, Neil Kurtzman wrote that "The libretto by Alice Goodman treats all of the characters in the piece seriously

with the exception of Henry Kissinger, whose X-rated cartoon depiction is so out of keeping with the rest of the action that it can only be considered the result of sophomoric malice." In the *New York Jewish Week*, Eric Herschethal wrote that "'Nixon in China' gives comfort to Kissinger's most vociferous critics...the opera portrays him as cruel, cunning and entirely devoid of human feeling." Tim Page, a Pulitzer Prize-winning critic, concluded in his original 1988 review that "to treat the president even-handedly and then to transform the secretary of state into a venal, jibbering, opportunistic buffoon is to lower the level of discourse considerably." (If Alex Ross, an ardent admirer of *Nixon in China*, ever commented on the opera's characterization of Kissinger, I could not locate it.)

Why was Kissinger targeted for such singular treatment, as being so much worse, so much more culpable, so much less human, than Mao, Nixon or even Madame Mao? Is it because he deserved that level of derision? Or is it because of some other aspect of the character or the way the character is perceived by those rendering him that isn't explicit? That Kissinger, like Goodman's parents, is a Jew and Holocaust survivor might have been an inspiration and basis for humanizing this character in the opera. Instead, he seems only to have aroused the kind of malice that sophomores, or Jewish adolescents who want to deny and reject the burden of their ethnic heritage, harbor for their parents.

Whatever the ingredients, Kissinger was destined to become in such troubled hands culture's old standby--the lecherous, treacherous, power-mad Jew, a figure that reemerged after the Holocaust not so notably among conservatives and rightists as among leftists, intellectuals, and artists. Lest we forget, *Nixon in China* and *Klinghoffer* were written in the heyday of a great international resurgence of anti-Semitism, fueled by blame and scapegoating of America, Israel and the Jews for the entire global and historical phenomena we call *jihad* ; a blame centered in the circumstances of the Palestinians; a blame that continues. Goodman, whose admitted anti-Zionism can't help but raise questions of internalized anti-Semitism, would appear to share these sentiments with no small number of other Jewish and non-Jewish socialists, progressives, intellectuals and artists. In the wake of Jewish indignation and criticism following the premiere of *Klinghoffer*, including from members of the Klinghoffer family who have denounced the opera as anti-Semitic, and likewise in the context of her marriage to the British poet Geoffrey Hill, Goodman converted to Christianity, becoming an ordained Anglican minister.



Alice Goodman

Meanwhile, how does the character of Kissinger fit into the greater operatic canon? If you compare the depiction of Kissinger in *Nixon in China* with Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger*, the similarities are striking. Both are Jewish caricatures whose Jewishness is vehemently implicit rather than explicit. Both are dehumanized, cartoon scapegoats for all the cultural wrong surrounding them. Neither has a moment of self-expression that could invite any level of identification or sympathy. On the contrary, the audience can only have loathing and contempt for both of them.

The most notable of efforts to mitigate Wagner's malevolently satirical portrait of Beckmesser--incidentally as scholars like Barry Millington, Marc A. Weiner and Paul Lawrence Rose increasingly identify anti-Semitism as intrinsic to *Die Meistersinger*--came in the recent period with the casting of one

of Germany's greatest real-life mastersingers, Hermann Prey, as Beckmesser in a number of stagings of the opera, including at Bayreuth and at the Met. Alas, Beckmesser's music is so relentlessly ugly and unsingable that not even Prey could render more than a modicum of dignity to the role. Such is the audience's stirred-up contempt that when Beckmesser is beset by a mob of *Volk* and beaten to a pulp, you want to join in; but perhaps a little less so when Beckmesser is Hermann Prey. If the Kissinger caricature weren't so poorly drawn, the same inclination would be true of his portrayal in *Nixon in China*. Would the problem be solved if we cast a great and beloved leading singer, a Bryn Terfel or Rene Pape, as Kissinger?

Goodman has recently said that she looked into herself in her portrayals of all the characters in *Nixon in China*, including Kissinger. But this admission seems disingenuous, both after the fact and defensive. Kissinger has also been described by the opera's co-creators as a "buffo" figure, as if the casting of him in this stock operatic role somehow mitigates, justifies and supersedes the other issues and questions any more than such an explanation would suffice for Wagner's treatment of Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger*.

Nixon in China is otherwise an original creation that qualifies as one of America's and contemporary opera's notable works. I was an early admirer of Peter Sellars' gift for rendering opera and theater more vital for contemporary and younger audiences, from his first production of *Don Giovanni* in a Massachusetts high school gymnasium with the Don as a heroin addict in Spanish Harlem, on through to his signature Mozart productions of *The Marriage of Figaro* set in Trump Tower and *Così fan Tutte* set in a Cape Cod diner. So I was curious about his later productions --a televangelical *Tannhauser*, a homoerotic *Tristan*, *The Merchant of Venice* with a black Shylock, *The Magic Flute*, *Orlando*, *Theodora*, *St Francois D'Assisi*, even his cell-phone *Othello*. Sellars' daring retained its appeal, even as the whole deconstructive approach to opera and theater he had spearheaded began to deflate. Though I liked what Sellars was trying to do in theory, the results seemed in increasingly uneasy alliance with the artworks themselves; and though I did see all the Adams operas he collaborated on, I made little effort to see the other Sellarsizations of classics. Peter Sellars deserves premiere credit for what became the predominant approach to theater and opera in our time. But after those early Mozart productions, nothing he himself staged approached the achievement of, say, the Patrice Chereau *Ring* cycle production at Bayreuth.

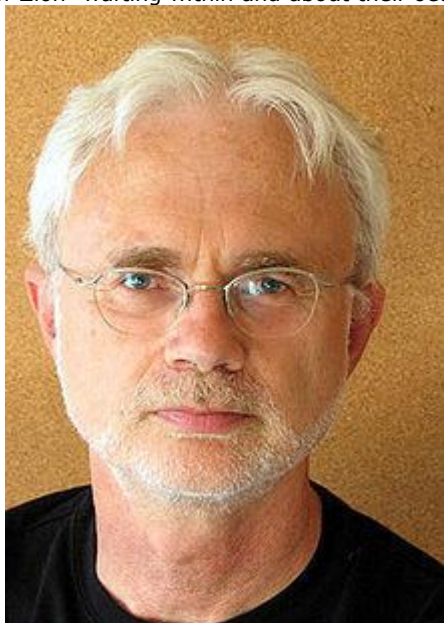


Peter Sellars

I've also admired the work of John Adams. I found some of the pieces in *Nixon in China* to be exhilarating, and some of his music for *Klinghoffer* and *Dr. Atomic* to be expressive and beautiful. Sellars and Adams are talents I've wanted to be on board with. But so troubling a figure is Alice Goodman and so troubling their opera's portrayal of Kissinger that, as with Wagner's work in the wake of the publication of his epochal hatefest, "Judaism in Music," the rest of their work feels thereby tainted. Just as I can never again be really comfortable with Wagner, I can likewise never again be really comfortable with Goodman, Adams, Sellars, their operas or their stagings.

In fact, so on guard did I become regarding their work that I experienced a paranoid illusion during the premiere of *Dr. Atomic* at the Met. Not so unlike the way Pat Nixon imagines that she sees a rapacious Henry Kissinger in the ballet, *The Red Detachment of Women*, in *Nixon in China*, I imagined that the chains that covered the big atomic bomb that hovered over nearly all of the proceedings in *Dr. Atomic* were arranged to suggest a star of David covering the globe. (Full disclosure: Neither my partner Arnie, with whom I attended the performance, nor anyone else I know who saw *Dr. Atomic* felt they saw this. Nor was any such pattern discernible in my subsequent perusals of photographs of the production.) *Dr. Atomic* was directed by Penny Woolcock, who also directed a film version of *The Death of Klinghoffer* based on the opera for British television.

Whatever my own misgivings or apprehensions, everyone should be free to see and admire this or any other art. But it should not be demanded that I do, or that I endorse the greatness of such art as surpassing and transcending any and all other concerns and feelings. Meanwhile, whatever else the team of Adams, Goodman and Sellars has achieved, however ostensibly humanitarian and laudable their professed intentions, it's difficult for me to get past their creation of Kissinger, which I can't help but see as the ugliest and most hateful Jewish caricature in all of opera, the first real successor to Beckmesser, Alberich and Mime. I can't help but sense the old "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" wafting within and about their *oeuvre*.



John Adams

Which brings us back to *Klinghoffer*, in which the Klinghoffers are portrayed as stereotypical Jewish-American materialists. That the opera contains a number of small moments, details and vignettes that show the humanity of all the characters, Jewish as well as Palestinian, noble and less noble, does not resolve the problem that lies at the heart of this opera's composition and presentation: its globalization of circumstances, grievances and evils. In 2003, Edward Rothstein updated his stage review of *Klinghoffer* to a critique of Penny Woolcock's filmed version for its affirmation of "two ideas now commonplace among radical critics of Israel: that Jews acted like Nazis, and that refugees

from the Holocaust were instrumental in the founding of the state, visiting upon Palestinians the sins of others."

"The Judaism I was raised in was strongly Zionist," said Alice Goodman in an interview in *the Guardian* in 2012. "It had two foci almost - the *Shoah* [the Holocaust] and the State of Israel, and they were related in the same way the crucifixion is related to the resurrection in Christianity. Even when I was a child, I didn't totally buy that. I didn't buy the State of Israel being the recompense for the murder of European Jewry, recompense not being quite the right word, of course. The word one wants would be more like apotheosis or elevation."

[Following the presentation to our class of a Holocaust documentary when I was 8 years old], Goodman continued, "our very traumatised junior rabbi quoted the song that begins, 'Cast out your wrath upon the nations that know ye not.' In Hebrew it is, 'Cast out your wrath upon the goyim [a disparaging term for non-Jews],' which is what he said. My infantile brain thought, 'No, that's not the right answer.' That thought is the thing that's brought me here. And it has to do with *Klinghoffer* as well."

Since Goodman knows that most Israelis, like her parents, are not very religious, why is she basing her judgments on impressions she admits were made on her when she was preadolescent?

In anticipation of the ENO premiere of *The Death of Klinghoffer* there was a flurry of advance press, including the interview with Goodman. Lisa Klinghoffer, one of Leon and Marilyn Klinghoffer's daughters, is also quoted in *the Guardian*: "The opera displays thoughts and feelings about our parents and friends they never had or expressed. Prior to the production, I tried to tell Peter Sellars [the director of the original staging] about our parents, but he said that he did not want or need to hear them. To us he was willing to distort the image of our parents and to show a stereotypical picture of the 'fat cat' American Jew to express his political agenda."

Setting aside the issue of Alice Goodman's, Sellars' and Adams' ideological background and orientation, a case can always be made for the motivation and psychology of fascists. Why did the Nazis do what they did? What did the Jews do to make the Germans so angry at them? There must have been reasons for it. Fat-cat wealth and arrogance! Bolshevism! Why did Osama bin Laden hate America, Israel and the Jews as much as he did? There must have been reasons for this too. Colonialism! Likewise the Taliban's blowing up of Afghanistan's great Buddha statues. Infidels! In the case of the Palestinians, who live under conditions of occupation by Israel but who have never been willing to recognize Israel's right to exist and who voted to be co-governed by Hamas, an Iran-backed terrorist organization unremittingly committed to Israel's destruction, the issues might appear to be more complicated. Even so, it would seem that the commission of fascistic and terrorist acts and atrocities is far more a matter of prosecution and prevention than compassion, understanding and forgiveness. That proved to be true of Nazism and it is likewise true of the greater arc of Islamic extremism and terrorism. The challenge here would seem far less to try to explain, understand, mollify and forgive terrorism and extremism than to stop and prevent it. However reasonable and even laudable some of its intentions and whatever the qualifiers of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *The Death of Klinghoffer* does more to obscure, retard and inflame that process than help it.

As Richard Taruskin concluded in his *New York Times* response to the controversies surrounding the postponements and cancellations of scheduled productions of *The Death of Klinghoffer* in the aftermath of 9/11, "If terrorism -- specifically, the commission or advocacy of deliberate acts of deadly violence directed randomly at the innocent -- is to be defeated, world public opinion has to be turned decisively against it. The only way to do that is to focus resolutely on the acts rather than their claimed (or conjectured) motivations, and to characterize all such acts, whatever their motivation, as crimes. This means no longer romanticizing terrorists as Robin Hoods and no longer idealizing their deeds as rough poetic justice. If we indulge such notions when we happen to agree or sympathize with the aims, then we have forfeited the moral ground from which any such

acts can be convincingly condemned...In the wake of Sept. 11, we might want, finally, to get beyond sentimental complacency about art. Art is not blameless. Art can inflict harm."

So was there a lesson to be learned by the co-creators of *Nixon and China* and *Klinghoffer* from the experience of Wagner? Yes, there was. It's an expansion and twist of the famous saying attributed to Santayana: Those who do not learn the lessons of the past are condemned to repeat it. But even when they do learn those lessons, they are likely to repeat the past, so long as they think they can get away with it. Wagner not only got away with it, it's increasingly clear that his career and works knowingly and greatly benefited from the attendant and subsequent controversies. Intentionally or otherwise, the controversies surrounding *Nixon in China* and *The Death of Klinghoffer* are playing out along a comparable trajectory. From its recent and current repertory, perhaps the Met should consider a new option for its mini-series subscriptions: *Die Meistersinger*, *Nixon in China* and *The Death of Klinghoffer*.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lawrence-d-mass-md/on-the-future-of-wagneris_1_b_5584126.html

On The Future of Wagnerism, Part 4: Comparing the Jewish Protests of *Klinghoffer* with the Gay Protests of *Cruising* and by ACT UP

Posted: 11/12/2014 9:07 am EST



Former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani Speaking at the Oct 20 *Klinghoffer* Protest

On Sept 20, opening night of the current Metropolitan Opera season, I ventured to Lincoln Center to observe what I understood would be an organized Jewish protest of the Met for its planned presentation of the opera *The Death of Klinghoffer*. The Oct 20 Met premiere drew an even larger demonstration. I saw the US premiere of the opera at BAM in 1991 and had little inclination to experience it again, notwithstanding its subsequent elimination of an early scene underscoring the opera's conceptualization of Leon and Marilyn Klinghoffer as stereotypical Jewish-American materialists.

Apart from the controversies about the opera's politics, the bigger problem with *Klinghoffer* is its weakness as music drama. Though it has passages of expressive music and some moments that are insightful, challenging and moving, most of this quasi-oratorio is textually opaque and musically inert. By comparison, and apart from its conspicuously outsized caricaturing of Henry Kissinger, *Nixon in China* is a more coherent, dramatic and engaging work, though it, too, inevitably deflates. Though I was more drawn to attend that opera's revival by the Met in 2011, I finally decided against doing so because of my discomfort with what seemed to me its covertly anti-Semitic depiction of Kissinger.

In the wake of all the protest, a number of artists, intellectuals and other distinguished persons have responded positively to *Klinghoffer*. As quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg found the opera to be "a most sympathetic portrayal of the Klinghoffers...both of [whom] come across as very strong, very brave characters...There was nothing anti-Semitic about the opera." Justice Ginsburg also disputed claims that the opera glorified terrorism. "The terrorists are not portrayed as people that you would like. Far from

it...They are being portrayed as bullies and irrational...There is one very dramatic scene of a Palestinian mother raising this child, his toy is a gun from when he's five years old, and she's raising him so that he will one day do a very brave act that will result in his own death and then he will go to paradise...It was chilling."

Prior to the Met premiere, I had already shared my more critical viewpoint on *Huffington Post* in my essay, "On The Future of Wagnerism, Part 3: Beckmesser, Kissinger and The *Klinghoffer* Controversy." Because a number of the protesters were calling for the Met to cancel the opera, as an opponent of censorship, I did not feel I could join their ranks. But as a Jew who is concerned about past, current and future resurgences of anti-Semitism, I was heartened and inspired to see such organized, courageous and spirited Jewish protest.

The *Klinghoffer* clashes bring to mind a comparably sentinel episode in the history of minorities, art and censorship, around the William Friedkin movie, *Cruising*, starring Al Pacino, in 1979/80. Just as *Klinghoffer*, as originally created, was seen by many Jews as yet another anti-Semitic attack on Jews, so was *Cruising* seen by gays as yet another homophobic attack on gay people. In both cases, the works themselves were far from being the worst of their genres and their creators did not explicitly endorse extremist views.

Friedkin was a kind of macho Hollywood liberal who may not himself have been sure what he thought about gays but who didn't think of himself as homophobic and who believed he was making an artistic contribution. Similarly, composer John Adams, librettist Alice Goodman and director Peter Sellars, the co-creators of *Klinghoffer*, see themselves primarily as artists and humanitarians and don't think of themselves as anti-Semitic or endorsing terrorism. Fortunately for both communities but unfortunately for the artworks and their creators, both works struck sensitivities that ignited historical protests.



Gay Protesters of the movie *Cruising*

Just as cohorts of Jews called for the cancellation of *Klinghoffer*, legions of gay people, spearheaded by influential *Village Voice* columnist Arthur Bell, were determined to shut down the filming of *Cruising*. At that time I myself was writing a piece for the gay press that asked "Why is Hollywood Dressing Gays to Kill?" It complemented the work of our extended family member Vito Russo, (who was my life partner Arnie Kantrowitz's closest friend and the author of the celebrated work of gay consciousness, *The Celluloid Closet*, about the history of homosexuality and film). Like Arthur and many other GLBT people, we -- Arnie, Vito and I -- were fed up with the "necrology," as Vito called it, of gay people in film, the vast majority of whom ended up dead -- murdered or having committed suicide, imprisoned and/or insane. This was a genre and tradition that Friedkin's film, a dark look at the gay s-m scene and gay murder, was clearly going to play right into. Thus did *Cruising* become a lightning rod for the pent-up gay anger of decades.

Alas, there was a problem with Bell's call for a shutdown of the film, a problem Vito and Arnie realized almost immediately. Although they felt deeply in sync with this gay activist protest, they did not feel they could go the full distance of calling for the banning or censorship of this film or any other artwork, no matter how otherwise biased, exploitative, smarmy or even dangerous. As with Jewish concerns that *Klinghoffer* would

inflame anti-Semitic violence, especially in Europe, what seemed most urgent in calling for the banning of *Cruising* was its potential to incite more hate crime against gays, who already had sustained sky-high rates of violent assault and murder, savagery that continues unabated today in Russia, Africa, throughout the Islamic world and otherwise globally.

It was difficult to keep one's neutrality around the issue of the film's potential to incite violence, but the censorship boundary prevailed for Arnie, Vito, other gay observers and me. (I was acquainted with Vito but didn't meet Arnie until 1981.) Neither Arnie nor Vito marched with the protesters. Nor, as I recall, did I. In the aftermath, just as *Klinghoffer* was adapted to take out its most offensive references, *Cruising* was adapted to include a new gay-affirmative line or two under pressure from the protesters. Filming was completed and *Cruising* opened to mostly critical reviews. Eventually, of course, the controversy died and the film took its place in the annals of film as an historical curiosity rather than anything more controversial, substantial or enduring. Apart from some favorable reviews, one critic calling it a "masterpiece," a similar trajectory followed for *Klinghoffer* which is likely to encounter a comparable fate in the annals of music.

Although the *Cruising* episode wasn't a shining moment for the history of censorship and art, it was a shining moment for the history of the gay civil rights struggle. And I would propose that whatever its comparable tarnishing of the sanctity of art, the *Klinghoffer* protests were likewise a shining moment in the history of minority and Jewish consciousness and activism, here in America as well as globally.

Not surprisingly, our critics were not only safely against censorship but as such safely against the protesters. From that vantage point they could return to their routines of being performance reviewers and sanctity-of-art guardians rather than more independent and in-depth observers. Apart from the viewpoint of preeminent musicologist Richard Taruskin that had been published in the *New York Times* in defense of the Boston Symphony's cancellation of a scheduled concert performance of *Klinghoffer* in the wake of 9/11, no mainstream take on the Met Opera confrontations gave in-depth credibility or respect to Jewish concerns or the Met's decision to cancel a live broadcast of the production, though several of the critics mentioned the program statement by the Klinghoffer daughters, who consider the opera to be anti-Semitic, dishonest and dishonoring of their parents. Notably, most critics chose to showcase the more extremist protest placards and statements at the expense of weighing more challenging ones.

In the *New Yorker*, Alex Ross did note that both former Governor David Paterson and former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, an opera lover who otherwise admires Adams' music, weighed in at the rally with concerns about the opera's potential to stoke hostilities. Ross then proceeded to expose the rally as little more than a forum for fanaticism. "The most aggressive rhetoric came from Jeffrey Wiesenfeld, a money manager who has also worked as a political operative," Ross observed. "A few years ago, Wiesenfeld won notoriety for seeking, unsuccessfully, to deny the playwright Tony Kushner an honorary degree, on account of Kushner's criticisms of Israel. Wiesenfeld led the *Klinghoffer* rally, and he had much to say. "This is not art," he thundered. "This is crap. This is detritus. This is garbage." He declared, as he did at an anti-*Klinghoffer* event last month, that the set should be burned. He made a cryptic joke to the effect that, if something were to happen to Gelb that night, the board of the Met would be the first suspects. The rally went on in that vein."

Wiesenfeld is a former CUNY trustee who was quoted in the *Forward* as having "once said that his mother would have called playwright Tony Kushner a 'Kapo.'" Alas, Wiesenfeld's remarks recalled the bitter and protracted opposition to the New York City gay civil rights bill by conservative and orthodox Jews. Also concerning at that time, however, were some of the angrier reactions to that opposition, including from some gay Jews. Never underestimate the power of justification--whether we're talking about Roy Cohn, Henry Kissinger, Bernie Madoff or the acts of homophobic or Islamophobic Jewish bigots and zealots --

to "justify" judgments and resentments, including those which abet anti-Semitism. Meanwhile, if the *Klinghoffer* rallies had any other value or invited any deeper level of analysis, that's not something you were going to find in the otherwise defensive coverage of our leading music critics.

If the critics did have any misgivings about their stances, they needed only to look for reassurances to Peter Gelb (who is also Jewish) and The *New York Times* editorial board as well as a wide range of Jewish artists and intellectuals, the majority of whom all too easily and quickly embrace the dominant philosophy of "*art uber alles*" at the expense of their own minority consciousness and dignity. "For people to call me a self-hating Jew is so ludicrous that it's beyond chilling," Gelb told the *Forward*.

In the bigger picture, the splitting of Jewish opinion is reminiscent of that which unfolded in Europe under Nazism: between the educated, assimilated Jewish intellectuals, artists and *kultur* lovers on the one hand and the *Ostjuden*--the loud, vulgar eastern European and Russian Jewish rabble--on the other. Meanwhile, as today's pogroms against gays in Russia worsen, Gelb has yet to issue a statement of protest on behalf of the Met, which continues to showcase an unprecedented array of politically silent Russian artists, most notably Anna Netrebko and Valery Gergiev, both of whom remain unapologetic pals of Vladimir Putin.

Several years ago in Los Angeles, some Jews protested the L.A. Opera's plans for a new *Ring* cycle. They questioned the priority of appropriating large sums of money and resources for the tainted works of one of history's most virulent anti-Semites. Although they were aggressively defeated and plans for the cycle proceeded apace, these protests proved to be a harbinger of the *Klinghoffer* confrontations.

What would have happened if the educated and upper class Jews of Wagner's time--especially those in Wagner's own circles and throughout the music world of that period--had been more forthright, organized and determined in protests of Wagner's anti-Semitism, like the Jews here who protested *Klinghoffer*? Might such demonstrations have made a difference in Wagner's choice of subjects or otherwise in the expression of his prejudices? Might Wagner have been influenced--the way Dickens was influenced to respond with more sensitivity to Jewish concerns about the character of Fagin--to write a retraction or modification of his infamous diatribe, "Judaism in Music"? Unlikely, perhaps, but if a leading anti-Semite like Henry Ford could be thus influenced, albeit via anti-defamation litigation, why not Wagner?



ACT UP protesters

If Jews had been more organized and outspoken in Nazi Germany, albeit at their peril, might the course of history have been different? Hannah Arendt seems to have thought so, and in our time likewise one of her disciples, Larry Kramer, the great gay and AIDS activist and author of *The Normal Heart*. Kramer was inspired by Arendt in the conviction they appeared to share that -- for gay people in their greatest crisis, like the Jews in theirs -- silence equals death.

Which brings us to another example of gay protest pertinent to our discussion, the aggressive demonstrations of the monumentally heroic and successful AIDS activist organization founded by Kramer: ACT UP. At their most confrontational, this organization used extremely provocative rhetoric with highly confrontational but technically peaceful tactics to pursue its agenda of influencing AIDS research and health care. Ed Koch and Ronald Reagan were repeatedly denounced by Kramer and ACT UP as murderers and mass-murderers, as Hitlerian, as Nazis committing genocide. As with some of the more extremist statements of those protesting *Klinghoffer* and *Cruising*, I could not go to these same lengths myself.

I could not carry banners calling our gay and AIDS nemeses, including people like Anthony Fauci, Nazis and Hitler and accusing them of genocide. But I did march with ACT UP and did carry a banner that read: "We Need Experts, Not Bigots." The point here is that I marched in solidarity with Larry Kramer and ACT UP, even though I couldn't endorse some of his and ACT UP's more extreme rhetoric and tactics. My reaction to the protesters of *Cruising* and *Klinghoffer* were strongly analogous. I couldn't agree with their exaggerations of the film's or opera's intentions or dangers and their calls for more extreme responses, but I felt in solidarity with their greater concerns.

In the case of *Klinghoffer*, as in the case of *Cruising*, the bottom lines for me are simple. I am concerned about some of the rhetoric and tactics of some gay radicals, but I am a lot more concerned about homophobia. While I share humanitarian concerns about the Palestinians and Israel's occupation of disputed territories, I'm a lot more concerned about Islamic aggression and anti-Semitism, as well as homophobia.

As for the value of art when weighed against the value of life, in Part 3 of "On the Future of Wagnerism," I told the story of my partner Arnie asking his boyhood German-American friend if Wagner's art were more important than the lives of 6 million Jews. The answer was "yes." Needless to add, I do not agree. In fact, though I've yet to betray my standard of not endorsing censorship, if I were asked to press a button that would eliminate Wagner's art from history, memory and the future as the cost of changing the course of the history of World War 2 and its genocides or the possibility of their recurrence, my finger would press that button so quickly and so hard it would probably break.

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On the Future of Wagnerism, Part 5: The Wagner Family and Questions of Forgiveness



Wagner's grandsons, Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner, with Hitler

Richard Wagner's grandsons, Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner, who led the postwar Bayreuth Festival, were Nazis. Wolfgang fought on the front lines of the war. Wieland was a director of the Flossenberg Concentration Camp near Bayreuth, 30,000 of whose 90,000 inmates were murdered. Neither was criminally prosecuted. Neither ever publicly repented or asked for forgiveness.

"On the Future of Wagnerism" is a series on *Huffington Post* by Lawrence D. Mass. As we demarcate the 100th

anniversary of the Armenian genocide, which Pope Francis called "the first genocide of the twentieth century," Mass looks at questions of disclosure and forgiveness surrounding Wagnerism. "Concealing or denying evil," said Francis, who was inspired by Parsifal's journey from ignorance to knowledge, "is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it."

In 1998 the *New Yorker* published an essay about Wagner and the Jews called "The Unforgiven" by Alex Ross. Ross had met with Wagner's great grandson, the writer and musicologist Gottfried Wagner, whose autobiographical account of the Wagner family, Bayreuth's collaborations with Hitler and Nazism, and their aftermath, *Twilight of the Wagners: The Unveiling of a Family's Legacy*, had been published in 1997.

I read Ross's essay when it came out. At that time, I was so impressed with what seemed to be its scope, insights and caring that I wondered whether the title had been chosen by an editor rather than by Ross himself. Calling it "The Unforgiven" seemed to raise questions of who were the unforgiving and who the unforgiven, and why. Since forgiveness is, after all, widely held to be a virtue, criticism seemed implicit not of the unforgiven but of the unforgiving. As it turns out, the essay does make clarifying reference to "The Unforgiven." Reviewing the situation in Israel, Ross noted that the music of Richard Strauss was being played there following years of banishment and that "it is now only Wagner -- The Unforgiven -- who has an asterisk next to his name."

What Ross was saying is that among leading cultural figures tainted by anti-Semitism and/or Nazism, only Wagner has remained *persona non grata*, "unforgiven," and only in Israel. At first, any reservations I might have had about this statement and the essay's title were offset by Ross's notable inventory of Wagner's anti-Semitism and his acknowledgment of Wagner's having been what Ross, quoting Auden, called "an absolute shit." Indeed, Ross's essay concludes with the respectful, sensitive observation that if there's a shrine like Bayreuth where Wagner can still be contemplated with religious singularity and fervor, perhaps it's right that there also be a place (Israel) where his presence is absent, unheard.

But what does it say about Israel and Jews that some among us seem not to have forgiven Wagner? Isn't forgiveness one of the most fundamental of all religious, philosophical and spiritual precepts? Didn't Pope John Paul II make a special point of visiting and forgiving his attempted assassin? Didn't Jesus on the cross ask that his persecutors be forgiven? And wasn't it Shylock's eye-for-an-eye inability to forgive his Christian adversaries that provoked their anti-Semitic retaliations?

Inevitably, it's difficult not to conclude that some version of such thinking underlies Ross' viewpoint about what he senses to be the ongoing animus of some Jews against Wagner and his music, and the tension still felt by many more. Isn't it, as Ross otherwise has repeatedly suggested, finally time to move on, acknowledging, but also accepting the past and forgiving its sins and sinners? Isn't it time that we accept Ross's challenge to forgive Wagner more thoroughly, with fewer reservations and with greater unanimity among us than we ever have before?

Let's take a closer look at the issue of forgiveness as it has played out among Jews and Germans in music and culture thus far. How many famous Jews have expressed their admiration and appreciation of Wagner, notwithstanding his being genocidally anti-Semitic, and in the aftermath of the Holocaust? Hundreds? Easily. And what of the countless other Jews, many of whom unselfconsciously self-identify as Wagnerites, who so ardently admire the *Ring* cycle, *Die Meistersinger* and *Parsifal*, despite their anti-Semitic stereotypes? In fact, I believe I may be the only self-designated Jewish Wagnerite who has ever rescinded that identity -- of being a Wagnerite -- in the wake of the ever-worsening revelations of Wagner's anti-Semitism and its influence on his family, Hitler and Nazism.

Whatever qualifiers about separating the composer from his art they may acknowledge when pressed, virtually all leading Jewish figures in music -- from Hermann Levi, who conducted the world premiere of *Parsifal* and was a pall bearer at Wagner's funeral,

to others of the inner circle of Wagner's admirers who are sometimes referred to as "Wagner's Jews," to Gustav Mahler, to Bruno Walter, Leo Blech, Otto Klemperer, Georg Solti, James Levine, Daniel Barenboim and even Leonard Bernstein -- have resolutely refused to further qualify their love of Wagner's music and operas or their commitment to preserving his legacy. In fact, the question that needs to be asked is exactly the opposite of that earlier posed: Except for what is doubtless at this point a very small minority of survivors of concentration camps in Israel, how rare is it to find a prominent Jewish opera commentator or cultural arbiter who has *not* forgiven Wagner, to the extent of having no objections to his being performed everywhere, including in Israel? Can even one such prominent musician or cultural spokesperson be identified?

On the other hand, how common is it for any Wagner family member, or for that matter any leading German musical or cultural figure, ever to have asked for forgiveness? Over a recent dinner a German friend and I shared memories of favorite singers. Elizabeth Schwartzkopf was high up on both our lists. He opined that despite the greatness of her art and career, she was never forgiven for having been a *Hitlerjugend*. I rejoined that while it's true that her reputation was thus tarnished, the problem that persisted for her and likewise with Herbert von Karajan and so many others, including Richard Strauss and Wagner himself, isn't quite so simply that she wasn't forgiven. Schwartzkopf was married to Jewish musical culture mogul Walter Legge and was greatly admired by many Jewish music and opera people, including me. The surpassing problem is that neither she nor von Karajan nor virtually any of the other German artists, including Strauss and Wagner, who were Nazis or who in varying degrees contributed to or collaborated with Nazism, ever admitted to any wrongdoing, ever expressed any regrets or ever asked anyone, and certainly not Jews, for forgiveness.

Instead of asking for forgiveness or otherwise expressing regret for the past, or even honestly and clearly acknowledging it, what most of these Nazi-tainted German artists have done at best, individually or collectively, is what might be called gestures of redress -- e.g., Schwartzkopf's marrying Walter Legge (a career move that reflected her explicit defense and credo of "Vissi d'arte"), von Karajan's conducting of Mahler, Bayreuth's engagement of Jewish conductors and the Villa Wahnfried's 1985 exhibit on "Wagner and the Jews" that Gottfried Wagner dismissed as a whitewash.

Let's look at Bayreuth. When I was coming of age as a young Jewish Wagnerite, we knew of Wagner's anti-Semitism and Hitler's adoration of Wagner. We knew that Winifred Wagner, who succeeded Siegfried Wagner (her gay husband, the composer's son, Gottfried's grandfather) had befriended Hitler to the extent of welcoming him as family at Bayreuth. We knew that she remained unwaveringly loyal to "Wolf" (Hitler) even after the war, as a result of which she was officially interdicted from participating in the postwar administration of the Bayreuth Festival. We knew that her sons Wieland and Wolfgang likewise embraced "Onkel Wolf." But they were young adults at that time, and after the war, with Jews back on Bayreuth's rosters and with Bayreuth's alliances with the cultural institutions of former enemies restored, Bayreuth and the Wagner family, ostensibly *sans* Winifred, seemed to be making credible efforts to move beyond the past.

And of course, there was the shining beacon of credibility and trust that was Wagner's granddaughter, Friedelind, who became outspokenly anti-Hitler and fled Nazi Germany for America during the war. As an exemplar of German resistance to Hitler, she lent unparalleled credibility to our wishful thinking that the whole business of Nazism's embrace of Wagner was pretty much an aberration, a distortion of the composer's art that would have been as disturbing to Wagner himself as it was alleged to be to the majority of educated and enlightened Germans. We Wagnerites so wanted to believe that most Germans were overwhelmed by Hitler and Nazism and that their collaborations were increasingly, if not initially, involuntary and reluctant.

In addition to Friedelind, there were many examples of leading Wagner singers and conductors who denounced Hitler and

refused to appear in Nazi Germany, including Arturo Toscanini, Lotte Lehmann, Lauritz Melchior (the greatest of heldentenors) and Erich Kleiber, as well as those who were Jewish, such as Friederich Schorr and Bruno Walter. These exceptions notwithstanding, we simply did not know the extent of Bayreuth's collusions with Hitler and Nazism, in sync with the extent and enthusiasm of collaboration of the vast majority of Germans. Nor did we have any real sense of the scale of unexpressed and otherwise nonexistent remorse and regret following the war by the Wagner family, Bayreuth and Hitler's willing executioners, the German *Volk*.

Beyond our credulity and denial about the silence surrounding the *Nazizeit* at Bayreuth, we Wagnerites were left to accept that what was there could be interpreted at least indirectly as addressing the past. Ostensibly, we had an all new and de-Nazified Bayreuth Festival under the auspices of Wieland Wagner and Wolfgang Wagner that seemed to look boldly to the future, with international and multi-racial casting and with stagings that were variously described as modernist, Freudian, minimalist and progressive, and which, in the case of Wieland's productions, held the once again international audiences in a thrall has yet to be matched.

So innovative were the stagings of Wieland Wagner that they seemed effortlessly to at once acknowledge and transcend the past and its controversies. Wagner the racist? Then why not toy with that concept by provocatively casting the first black singer to appear at Bayreuth, Grace Bumbry, in the role of Venus in *Tannhauser*? Thus was the stage set by Wieland Wagner, one of opera history's most acclaimed directors, for Wagner's art to subsume every Wagner controversy and challenge, to establish an artistic legacy that would eventually take on even the composer's anti-Semitism and the war he enkindled against the Jews.

Following Wieland's death from lung cancer in 1966, Bayreuth staged many such productions by a variety of leading directors, peaking with the Bayreuth centennial production, set in the Industrial Age, of the *Ring* cycle by Patrice Chereau, in which the Nibelungs were overtly depicted as Jews, and including a *Meistersinger* by Wagner's great granddaughter Katherina that evoked the Nurnberg of Adolf Hitler. Clearly, it seemed, whatever happened in the past, Wagner and Bayreuth were greater than that past, than "the Nazi rut" of Hitler and WW2. With those biggest of controversies increasingly subsumed within endlessly imaginative, deconstructive stagings, it seemed that Wagner's art was well on its way, perhaps moreso than ever, to becoming the great art of the future it was intended and declaimed by Wagner to be.

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On The Future of Wagnerism, Part 6: The Wagner Family and Questions of Forgiveness (Conclusion)

Just as we think of the films of the exceptionally gifted Leni Riefenstahl as Nazi art, so we are in an inexorable process of appreciating much of the art of Richard Wagner as such.

To recap, we knew that with the later exception of Wagner's granddaughter Friedelind, the Wagner family collaborated enthusiastically with Hitler and the war, that they never protested or participated in any level of resistance. But again, Wagner's grandsons Wieland and Wolfgang were teens during Hitler's early rise to power and, though their later silence about Hitler and Nazism was disappointing, they were officially "de-Nazified," along with their unwaveringly Hitler-loyal mother, Winifred, albeit on the basis of minor qualifiers. Winifred did help a few Jewish artists to emigrate, and she protected a few others who were essential to casting, like Max Lorenz, who was homosexual and whose wife was Jewish. In any event, with a mandate from their conquerors, and the support of many Jews (who had likewise been so supportive of Wagner himself),

Bayreuth and the Wagners appeared eager to move forward, which they seemed to be doing with notable success. Time for all of us to let bygones be bygones, right?



Winifred Wagner with Hitler and her sons Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner at Bayreuth

What we failed to appreciate was the seriousness and depth of the Wagner family's entanglements with Hitler and Nazism. What we already knew was bad enough, but what emerged subsequently was worse. And who knows what revelations there will be from documents at Bayreuth and those possessed by Wagner family members that have yet to be released. Though it became common knowledge and parlance to refer to Wolfgang as an unrepentant old Nazi who was wounded on the front lines of the war, what came to light about Wieland years later is a lot more disturbing. At Hitler's alleged insistence, Wieland became a titular head of the Flossenberg concentration camp in the environs of Bayreuth.

The camp, we were reassured, was more for political prisoners and wasn't a death camp *per se*. And we were likewise reassured that Wieland, whose deep commitment to his artistic calling is hard to doubt, spent most of his time there working on staging concepts for Wagner, albeit admittedly with the assistance of slave labor. Flossenberg may not have had crematoria on the scale of Auschwitz but of the 90,000 prisoners who passed through it, 30,000 were murdered there.

According to Wieland Wagner's mistress, the soprano Anja Silja, this was a source of personal regret and remorse for Wieland, who, however, never found a way -- unlike, for example, the recently deceased Gunther Grass -- to publicly acknowledge this shameful past, to publicly express any remorse or regret, or to ask for forgiveness. Apart from his own silence, the question now is not why was Wieland Wagner de-Nazified. It's why wasn't Wieland Wagner tried and prosecuted for war crimes and mass murder. Parallel questions about Wolfgang Wagner and Winifred Wagner are inevitable. Apparently, the reason the Wagners weren't more appropriately prosecuted is the same as that surrounding the decision to exploit rather than punish rocket scientist Werner von Braun. Unlike Winifred, however, von Braun didn't continue to publicly proclaim loyalty to Hitler following the war. Several generations later, it's clear that the whole business of the "de-Nazification" of music and cultural figures is past due for reconsideration.

It's widely known that Wolfgang Wagner, whose comparative absence of talent as a stage director was such that he soon ceded artistic direction of the Festival to his brother, was defensive and mum on questions of his own and Bayreuth's collaborations with Nazism. Following Wieland's death, and for the ensuing forty years, Wolfgang prevailed as CEO of the Bayreuth Festival, the securing of whose finances was his greatest achievement. Any questioning of this domineering administrator's known Nazism was tacitly offset by his engagement of prominent Jewish conductors, as well as of Patrice Chereau to stage what was arguably the most important production of the *Ring* cycle since its world premiere a century earlier. In October 2010, Wolfgang's daughter, Katherina Wagner -- who with her half-sister Eva Wagner-Pasquier were chosen by Wolfgang to succeed himself as co-directors of the

Festival -- planned to visit Israel in order to invite the Israel Chamber Orchestra to play a concert in July 2011 at the Bayreuth town hall, to end the post-1945 boycott of Wagner's music in Israel. Her visit was canceled after hostility from Holocaust survivors.

As for Winifred, and as is likewise widely known, her enduring and outspokenly unapologetic loyalty to Hitler was doubtless the reason she was officially banned from direct participation in the postwar management of the Bayreuth festival. But what did that mild wrist-tap mean? As is clear from Eva Rieger's *Friedelind Wagner*, her 2013 biography, Winifred's greater plan for Bayreuth was always that her two sons, Wieland and Wolfgang, would run the festival. Winifred did not take her rebellious daughter Friedelind seriously and the other Wagner sibling, Verena, was never under consideration for any role in the future of Bayreuth. Winifred may have been officially proscribed from direct, visible involvement in the administration of the Bayreuth Festival, but it's Winifred--Hitler's most devoted partisan and possibly lover, and who provided the paper on which Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*--whose blueprint for the future of Bayreuth was adopted.

A related bill of goods we were sold about Wagner and Bayreuth likewise had to do with Winifred. From the 1960's well into the 1990's and beyond we were reassured by our music critics that to literally read racism and anti-Semitism into Wagner's works was to distort them. During those years, there wasn't enough information to know better and it seemed the right thing to try to be affirming. (As I discuss in my *Confessions of a Jewish Wagnerite*, for a number of these writers, being in the closet as gay and/or Jewish and not probing Wagner's anti-Semitism seemed to be conjoined phenomena.) Throughout the earlier period of that same time frame, in mainstream news and literature about opera, Wagner and Bayreuth, Winifred was presented as this crazy old crone, fanatical in her inability to acknowledge the greater truth about Hitler, Nazism and WW2, and otherwise ultraconservative and myopic in her viewpoints about Wagner and staging. Alas, this cartoon image of Winifred doesn't begin to convey the strong, intelligent, flesh-and-blood figure captured by Hans Jurgen Syberberg in his 5 hour, 1975 documentary interview with her. Winifred essentially ran Bayreuth throughout the Nazi era and continued to run it subsequently, at least in terms of her plans having been implemented. To suggest that she -- together with many other prominent Nazi cultural figures -- had no real in-depth understanding or appreciation of Wagner is a mythology that was questionable to begin with but which became a lot more untenable in the wake of Syberberg's film.

It bears repeating here that the bill of goods we've been sold -- that Nazis like Hitler and Winifred had no real understanding of Wagner's art -- can now be put to rest. Whatever else denialists and apologists -- with Jewish Wagnerites forefront among them -- might want to read into the nether reaches of Wagner's art, there is no longer any credibility to the old rationalizations that Nazi appreciations of Wagner were profoundly ignorant, unsophisticated, artless and wrong.

Not so coincidentally, the entire business of our belief that Bayreuth was deeply and genuinely committed to refuting and transcending its Nazi past turns out to have been as naive as it was deluded. Where exactly all this leaves Wagner's art on the spectrum from grandiloquent kitsch to *Heilige Kunst* may continue to be debated, but to deny the racist, anti-Semitic appeal of so much of it now rings loudly hollow and untrue. What this means is that however artistically or dramatically impressive they otherwise may be, the *Ring* cycle, *Die Meistersinger* and *Parsifal* are racist and anti-Semitic works that qualify for designation as Nazi art. Just as we think of the films of the exceptionally gifted Leni Riefenstahl as Nazi art, so we are in an inexorable process of appreciating much of the art of Richard Wagner as such. In fact, such is my inexorable awareness of this reality that I winced when I learned that German Chancellor Angela Merkel was among the opening night attendees of last season's Bayreuth Festival.

In fact, if you look at virtually every ostensibly progressive development of postwar Bayreuth -- e.g., Wieland's productions,

the Chereau *Ring*, Wolfgang's featuring of prominent Jewish conductors -- it's possible to see how Nazi viewpoints continued to be served. While the casting of Grace Bumbry in that *Tannhauser* may have broken the race barrier at Bayreuth, the racist underbelly of this conception simultaneously hissed its suggestion of how far astray into realms of miscegenation erotic adventuring might lead Germans and Germany. Quite comparably, even as the Chereau *Ring* exposed Wagner's anti-Semitism, it also sharpened Wagner's case against the Jews as miscreants of capitalism and enemies of humanity. Finally, it's Wagner himself, however reluctantly, who established the precedent of featuring Jewish conductors and otherwise exploiting Jewish talent.

Even Friedelind Wagner is not who we thought she was. Yes, she bravely left her family, Bayreuth and Germany during the war, denouncing Hitler and choosing to live in America. And the ordeals she endured in the process do indeed qualify her for comparisons to Brunhilde. It's also clear that she was systematically excluded from more involvement at Bayreuth, before, during and after the war, largely because of her mother's wishes and manipulations. Not only was Friedelind a woman and deemed to be difficult, competitive with her brothers and comparatively ungifted, but she was widely seen and rejected, by her own mother and brothers as well as by most Germans, as a traitor to both her family and her country. Her return to Germany, not so unlike Marlene Dietrich's, was anything but triumphant.



Friedelind Wagner (right) with Hitler

The picture of Friedelind that emerges from Rieger's biography is a lot more mixed than previous histories, including Friedelind's own autobiography, *Heritage of Fire*. While it's certain that Friedelind became anti-Nazi following years of her thinking of Hitler as family, and though it's clear she believed her grandfather Richard would not have been supportive of Hitler, it remains unclear what she thought about the issue of anti-Semitism in Wagner's life, writings and works. Indeed, although Friedelind later befriended a number of Jews, it remains unclear what she thought about Jews.

In an effort to better understand Friedelind's journey, I contacted Eva Rieger. According to Rieger, Friedelind claimed in her autobiography that she became anti-Nazi earlier than was apparently the case; that as late as 1937, Friedelind was still praising Hitler. It's also clear that however fractured the Wagner family's relations, Friedelind never severed those ties, which she resumed, including with her mother, after the war. There was, after all, an estate to be settled and Friedelind still held hopes of greater involvement with Bayreuth.

As for the question of what Friedelind thought about Jews and regarding questions of anti-Semitism in Wagner's own life and works, after reviewing some events and statements of Friedelind from the earlier to the later period of Hitler, Rieger was neither able to clarify Friedelind's thinking nor reassure that Friedelind had ever really grappled with these issues. "I think that being a direct relative of Wagner," Rieger evasively concluded, "it is most difficult to admit that he was an anti-Semite." In view of which it's difficult not to revisit the old distrust of Friedelind as someone whose grievances were more engendered by her

lifelong family rivalries and resentments than by her later rejection of anti-Semitism, Hitler and Nazism.

In her most visible public role since the war, as the host of the internationally broadcast Chereau centennial *Ring* cycle in 1976, Friedelind's concluding observation now takes on additional resonance. "Who knows when another Alberich will come along to set the entire cycle in motion again?" asked Friedelind from a script prepared for her by music critic John Ardoin. In the Chereau production, as earlier alluded to, the Nibelungs are depicted as Jews. Whatever other problems and villains there are in the *Ring* cycle, whatever the complexities, however otherwise layered are the issues of blame, what Friedelind was saying, at least as scripted, is that this Jew in the Thornbush, Alberich, is the bottom line of all the trouble. So despite Friedelind's known resistance to Hitler and her brave acts of anti-Nazi defiance, including those against her own family, her failure to call into question or account for Wagner's anti-Semitism was notable and would seem to warrant further scrutiny and analysis.

The task of full disclosure fell to the only Wagner ever to look squarely at the issue, to confront it head on, to publicly and fully articulate the bigger picture of the fallout and import of Wagner's anti-Semitism and Bayreuth's ardent collaborations with Nazism: Friedelind's nephew, Wolfgang's son, Gottfried Wagner, whose *Twilight of The Wagners* seemed to be the *raison d'être* for Ross's essay, "The Unforgiven."

Ross clearly understood and succeeded in capturing Gottfried's belief that Wagner was foundationally, crucially influential to the advent of Hitler and Nazism. He even noted Gottfried's allegation that Hitler copied Wagner in his phraseology. Determined to test this hypothesis, Ross decided to submit Hitler and Wagner phrases to a sophisticated library computer program that can suggest complementarity, which indeed it did verify. Having acknowledged this astounding truth, Ross then proceeded not to further discuss or even to again mention Gottfried, whose condemnations of Wagner, the Wagner family, Bayreuth, Wagner's Jews and Wagner's legacy, are resolute. For Gottfried, there can be no talk of acceptance or forgiveness in the absence of full disclosure. Gottfried is the only Wagner to have done this exceedingly difficult and excruciatingly thankless work in his writings and lectures, and giving unauthorized Wagner family testimony on panels such as "The Post Holocaust Dialogue Group," in which Richard Wagner, much of his family, and Bayreuth are designated by Dr. Wagner as Holocaust perpetrators.

Talk about the Unforgiven. The price Gottfried Wagner has paid for all this is virtually complete ostracism from his family, from Bayreuth, from Wagner Societies and the greater world of Wagner appreciation. (Adding insult to injury in that world, Dr. Wagner also wrote a Foreword, "Redemption from Wagner the Redeemer: some introductory thoughts on Wagner's anti-Semitism," to my memoir, *Confessions of a Jewish Wagnerite*.) Ross understood and to a degree accepted what Gottfried had concluded and demonstrated. Ross knows he must fully and unflinchingly acknowledge the past. But having done that to a commendable extent, as he did in "The Unforgiven," he expects this will now give him the credibility and license, finally, to move forward again with Wagnerism. He's hopeful that laying everything out on the table will now fortify himself and others with the defense that, yes, we do know and we do now fully acknowledge what happened, and that what happened is troubling and regrettable. NOW can we move on?

Not so unlike opera commentator William Berger's easy recipes for appreciating "Wagner Without Fear," Ross wants to do whatever will allow us to appreciate Wagner the musical and artistic titan without so much interference, without so much background noise, without so much discomfort, without so much resistance. That Wagner's anti-Semitism and the resultant fallout might seriously, and indefinitely into the future, taint or even cripple Wagner appreciation -- and much of musical culture with it -- is overwhelming. It's not surprising that this would seem unacceptable to Ross, other Wagnerites and musical culture arbiters who are admittedly dismayed that the controversies are not only not diminishing, but growing.

So, is Wagner destined to be perpetually labeled, like Jews wearing yellow stars, with that asterisk of being one of history's most virulent anti-Semites and a perpetrator of the Holocaust? And if so, are the Jews and some residual failure of forgiveness on our part to blame for that? If Jews were to die out or otherwise be eliminated from the picture, would that solve the problem? If Israel were to lift the ban on Wagner and sign an affidavit of forgiveness, would that do it? Or is Wagner himself, in company with the accursed of his own creation -- the Flying Dutchman, Tannhauser, Lohengrin and that opera's Gottfried, the Nibelungs, the Wanderer, the gods, Beckmesser, Amfortas, the Knights of the Grail, Klingsor, Kundry, the Germans -- now doomed to bear the burden of a curse, that asterisk, likewise of his own creation? And is the only hope for redemption the "das ende" that Wagner himself seemed so profoundly to understand, foretell and invoke?

Which brings us, finally, to the question of where the issue of forgiveness rests with me personally. In my experience, bearing resentment, however justifiable, is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to get sick. Whereas forgiveness

has shown itself to be crucial to my equanimity, spirituality and serenity. So, yes, I do feel that forgiveness is in order. First, I forgive myself for going against the grain of mainstream musical culture and Wagner appreciation in sharing and affirming the perspective of Gottfried Wagner that Richard Wagner and his family were Holocaust perpetrators. Beyond which I also forgive Richard Wagner. And I do so with something of the mix of tenderness and detachment of his own forgiveness of his beloved Brunhilde, and another of his creations, Kundry, as he bestows upon each the sentence, but also the gift and blessing, of rest. If I wish to retain my humanity, I cannot harbor resentment. Which is why I conclude these reflections with a prayer for redemption. In this as in all things, May Thy Will Be Done.

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WHAT OPERA CAN TEACH US ABOUT COLLECTING – AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOOD AND GREAT

The opera is a source of inspiration for other art forms, as the various productions of Phantom of the Opera document. This poster for Universal's 1925 film sold for more than \$200,000 at auction last year. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions. The opera is a source of inspiration for other art forms, as the various productions of Phantom of the Opera document.



This poster for Universal's 1925 film sold for more than \$200,000 at auction last year. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



The opera has been a source of inspiration for other art forms. A uniface plaque of German composer Richard Wagner dated 1876 was likely produced during his lifetime. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



The opera is a source of inspiration for other art forms. This 2013 Latvian 1-lats silver coin, right, marks the 200th anniversary of composer Richard Wagner's birth. Image courtesy of Bank of Latvia.

This month for the Q&A I had the pleasure of chatting with my friend Mark Van Winkle. Mark has cataloged many of the greatest rarities in numismatics in his job as chief cataloger at Heritage Auctions, but he's also passionate about the arts, specifically opera.

During our conversation I asked him, "What can the opera teach someone about collecting coins?"

While I've never been much of an opera fan, I'm always curious how people find connections with the various passions in their lives, and how these connections enhance things.

Mark shared this story: In the 19th century, there were two prominent German operatic composers, Giacomo Meyerbeer and Richard Wagner. Meyerbeer was popular during his lifetime, but is little remembered today while Wagner is undoubtedly even more popular today than during his lifetime.

Why is one remembered and the other all but forgotten?

The answer is the difference between good and great. In U.S. numismatics, who is better remembered a hundred years after his death: Charles Barber or Augustus Saint-Gaudens? Obviously, Saint-Gaudens. Although Charles Barber created serviceable, traditional neoclassical designs that could be struck with one blow from a steam press, Saint-Gaudens adapted the three-dimensionality of sculpture to coin designs, something no one before (or arguably since) had done.

His coins were certainly a challenge to produce, but the results were magnificent. Greatness is remembered, while mediocrity is relegated to history's dust-bin.

How does this relate to coin collecting?

Think of the names that continue to pop up in numismatics: they're typically collectors who assembled magnificent groups of

coins or those who have made a lifetime of contributions to the hobby and our collective numismatic knowledge base. When you think of your collection, which coins bring the most pleasure or hold the most meaning? Just as with one's home, a coin collection can benefit from a spring cleaning to weed out the mediocrity and allow more room for greatness.

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Comments

[Fredrick Toben](#)

The most authentic voice on Adolf Hitler is Winifred Wagner who, together with her family, experienced first hand the rise and fall of Hitler and National Socialism Germany. Anyone who compares National Socialism-Germanism with Communism-Judaism is limiting their understanding of what the World War I and II conflicts were all about.

The above article's heading - The Nazi - Israel Nuclear Partnership - merely postulates a way out of this dialectic battle that still has not been resolved, though the seeds for Judaism's success is implied therein.

[Fredrick Toben](#)

I should also add Fascism into the Communism-Judaism category because National Socialism is certainly not comparable with Fascism.

[Comment removed – ed. AI]

https://www.coinworld.com/voices/steveroach/2015/04/what_opera_can_teach.htm

April 16, 2015

Thinking the Unthinkable: Are we Looking at Nuclear Treason?

By [James Lewis](#)

Nuclear treason is nothing new. It happened in the 1940s when U.S. Communist Party members smuggled Manhattan Project secrets to Stalin's Soviet Union, allowing him to explode his first bomb in 1949, just four years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It happened again when Pakistani [nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan](#), working at a Dutch nuclear facility, passed on the bomb secrets to Pakistan. Pakistan's [nuclear stockpile](#) is now reported to be vulnerable to a jihadist attack.

Since Harry Truman most American presidents have done their damndest to stop nuclear proliferation, especially to unstable rogues. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1963, the most dangerous moment in the nuclear age (so far), was all about Russia's attempt to plant nuclear-capable missiles in Cuba. Just this week Obama dismissed the 1963 Cuban Missile Crisis by saying that "I'm not interested in having battles that frankly started [before I was born](#)... The Cold War's been over for a long time."

It seems that history only started with the Birth of the One. A more direct confession of delusional narcissism is hard to find. Putin hasn't forgotten the Cold War, as Ukraine and Crimea are finding out the hard way. Nobody has forgotten history except the Leader of the Free World.

Bottom line: Bill Clinton surrendered to North Korean nukes, and Barack Obama surrendered to Iranian nukes. Those facts are utterly damning. If ever one of those weapons is exploded in anger, you can bet that historians will publish those facts to an outraged world.

Instead of actually stopping nuclear threats, both Clinton and Obama staged "Peace in Our Time" kabuki plays -- in collusion with our corrupt know-nothing media -- to make voters think they were doing something. Both Bill and Barry put their personal egos ahead of stopping weapons of mass destruction. Historian Victor Davis Hanson wondered this week if Obama's understanding of the world is a sort of "[romantic](#)" adolescent fantasy.

"The president has an adolescent, romantic view of professed revolutionary societies and anti-Western poseurs -- and of his own ability uniquely to reach out and win them over."

That's a nice way of saying it. Professor Hanson will remember that two of the major proponents of European Romanticism were Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Richard Wagner. Rousseau pioneered the leftist delusional world that all your liberal friends still secretly believe in, and inspired its first bloody explosion in the Revolutionary Terror in France followed by the Napoleonic Wars.

As for Richard Wagner, in his racial theorizing and hatred for Jews, and in his celebration of the Nordic gods, Wagner was in a direct line of development to [Adolf Hitler](#), who was also a "romantic." All those people were deeply delusional, and yes, they had a kind of otherworldly enthusiasm for a perfect world of Noble Savages and racial purity. Romanticism as a cultural movement is not the same as romance and love. Romanticism is Europe's mass lunacy that led to the radical Left and the Nazis.

All the hero-worshipping images of the Nazis and the Soviets come from European Romanticism.

The bottom line for any politician with great power is: Is he delusional or not? Stalin was diagnosed as paranoid by Russian psychologist Vladimir Bekhterev, who was promptly poisoned after saying so. Hitler was a delusional narcissist who was ultimately defeated by his own overconfidence in his prophetic powers. The Kim dynasty in North Korea constantly kills or starves hundreds of thousands of people to stay in power. Mentally disturbed leaders are not rare. They're a dime a dozen. So I come back to my first question, whether we are looking at nuclear treason today. Remember, nuclear treason is nothing new. It's happened twice that we know about, and probably more often since Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The people who smuggled Manhattan Project secrets to Josef Stalin were also romantics, believing in their own good intentions.

We now have a leader who takes his responsibility to protect the world from inconceivable danger very lightly indeed. If the Cuban Missile Crisis happened before 1963 it's ancient history. Obama believes his own inner voice with superhuman certainty, much more than he believes our most senior military and political leaders.

No one can change Obama's mind once it's made up.

No doubt millions of liberals think Obama is very "romantic."

The rest of us wonder how delusional he really is.

http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2015/04/thinking_the_unthinkable_are_we_looking_at_nuclear_treason.html

Comment:



[FToben](#) • [a few seconds ago](#)

Delusional? What a concept to throw into the discussion on serious matters when the argument should be about values, fundamental civilizing values, etc., which may well include such concepts/ideals as POWER and LOVE. The author's own delusional twist charges Richard Wagner with romanticism and hatred for Jews, which is a nonsense statement and rather a primitive, elementary observation that pushes the usual hatred line against things German. Hitler knew, as did Wagner, that the battle was, and still is, between Talmudic Judaism-Communism and Germanism-National Socialism.

Hitler wrote an opera, Wagner wrote many operas and his home at Bayreuth was well frequented by notable individuals who identified as Jews. A Jew who embraced Wagner's music inevitably grew out of his Talmudic Judaism and entered the world of Germanism and became a German Mensch, i.e.

assimilated. Mr Lewis and his Freudian conceptual nonsense cannot give us an in-depth understanding of political expediency because what he does is mere name-calling, and that is elementary school stuff. But it fits into the mould of those who claim to represent the American Thinker.

What about a mentioning of Israeli nuclear treason? Why does he fail to mention this important and globally pivotal matter?

After a couple of minutes the comment was removed. So much for American democracy in action!

'The Romantics Wagner & Liszt' at The In Series

by [Jessica Vaughan](#) on April 19, 2015

The In Series self-described salon-style concert tribute is a celebration of musical mastery – from the two composers featured to the pianists and singers – *The Romantics Wagner & Liszt* is an impressive show.



The Hungarian Franz Liszt and German Richard Wagner were contemporaries, but most don't realize they were also friends and frequent collaborators. The show features many of their shorter works, several songs of poetry set to music, but also dips into Wagner's opera repertoire.

Carlos César Rodríguez on the piano solos on four pieces, from the soft and sweet "Sposalizio" (Marriage) to the keyboard-spanning crescendos of "Tarantella" both by Liszt. He says the composer has been known as a piano breaker, but this one at the Casa Italiana held together for the famous "Liebestod" from *Tristan & Isolde*, written by Wagner but adapted for piano by Liszt.

He is joined for a pair of Petrarca's Sonnets by tenor Peter Burroughs, whose resonant voice matches the dramatic piano arpeggios and who can sell the unrequited love Petrarca constantly wrote about. One highlight is his piece from *Das Rheingold*, "Loge's

Soliloquy," a clever piece with echoes of the famous motifs from the rest of Wagner's epic *Ring* cycle.

The In Series Artistic Director Carla Hübner plays piano for five songs of poetry by Wagner's muse Matilde Wesendonck, sung by Karin Rosnizeck. She has a classical soprano and an expressive delivery for the surprisingly modern sentiments of these powerful poems. One highlight was "Stehe Still!" (Stand Still), in which she implores the wheel of time to take a break, accompanied by whirling notes on the piano in Wagner's classic marriage of music and meaning. The sweet, lyrical "Träume" (Dreams) is particularly suited to her voice.

These two composers revolutionized music as they know it and their influence is still felt over a century later. This is a not-to-be-missed chance to hear some of their lesser-known and more personal works sung and played by the best performers DC has to offer.

Running Time: One hour and 40 minutes, with one 15-minute intermission.

The Romantics Wagner & Liszt plays for one more performance today- Sunday, April 14, 2015 at 3:30 pm, at the In Series performing at Casa Italiana – 595 1/2 Third Street, NW in Washington, DC. For tickets, call the box office at (202) 204-7763, or purchase them [online](#).

<http://dcmetrotheaterarts.com/2015/04/19/the-romantics-wagner-liszt-at-the-in-series/>

Hitler's goddaughter fails in bid to win back Nazi loot



9NEWS, 9:05am April 28, 2015



Hermann Goering 1945 and daughter Edda in 1951. (Getty)

Adolf Hitler's goddaughter has failed in her bid to access artwork stolen by her infamous Nazi father, Hermann Goering, during WWII.

Goering's daughter Edda, 76, had petitioned the state of Bavaria to access to her family's possession, the [Telegraph](#) reports.

Her father, one of the most senior Nazi figures, had amassed a vast collection of property and artworks stolen during the latter stages of the war.



Edda Goering in 1986. (Supplied)

His assets, estimated at more than A\$250m, were confiscated after the fall of the Third Reich.

Ms Goering, who lives in Munich, had asked for only a small amount of the assets to be returned, enough for a "subsistence livelihood".



Adolf Hitler in 1937. Herman Goering was a senior member of the Third Reich before falling out with the Fuhrer late in the war. (AAP)

The hearing before the Bavarian parliament's Legal Affairs Committee lasted just a matter of minutes before being dismissed.

It followed a failed petition in the 1960s to have another painting returned to her family's care.

Commander of the German air force or Luftwaffe, Goering was found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity at the Nuremberg trials in 1946. He committed suicide the night before he was due to be hanged.

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<http://www.9news.com.au/World/2015/04/28/09/05/Hitler-s-goddaughter-fails-in-bid-to-win-back-Nazi-loot>

Holocaust scholar Prof. Deborah Lipstadt to keynote Jewish Federation's 115th Annual Meeting

By JOEL SCHATZ and CHRISTINE SIEROCKI LUPELLA

Internationally recognized Holocaust scholar Prof. Deborah Lipstadt will keynote the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, set for Thursday, Sept. 17, at the Hyatt Regency Chicago, 151 E. Wacker Drive. ([Register for the Annual Meeting here.](#))

In 1993, Lipstadt, the Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies at Emory University in Atlanta, authored *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*. In 1996, she was sued for libel by one of those named in the book, David Irving, who said his reputation as an historian was defamed. Five years later, a British judge found Irving to be a Holocaust denier, a falsifier of history, a racist, and an anti-Semite.

Lipstadt's 2005 book, *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier*, was adapted by British playwright David Hare and soon will be released as a feature film, starring Hilary Swank as Lipstadt.

The Federation's 115th Annual Meeting also will feature the State of the Federation address by President Steven B. Nasatir, and the presentation of several major leadership awards.

Foremost among them will be the organization's highest honor, the Julius Rosenwald Memorial Award, which this year goes to Frances G. Horwich. The award, named for the iconic Chicago business leader and philanthropist of the early 1900s, is presented each year to an individual who has demonstrated a lifetime of outstanding dedication and service to the Jewish community.

Horwich and her late husband, Franklin, have been stalwarts in Chicago's philanthropic world for decades. They carry on a generations-long family ethos of supporting and strengthening the Jewish community, and mentoring subsequent generations in the role of Jewish values and institutions in preserving community and heritage.

Amy Kirsch and Michael Teplitsky will receive the 51st annual Davis, Gidwitz & Glasser Young Leadership Award, presented to volunteers who have demonstrated exemplary dedication and have made significant contributions to Chicago's Jewish community.

Kirsch, 35, the 2015 YLD Campaign Chair, joined the YLD Board in 2011. As campaign chair, she led one of the most successful Big Events, raising \$250,000 with over 2,400 in attendance. Kirsch previously served as the 2013-2014 Executive Vice President of the YLD Board, chaired the 2013 YLD Israel Mission, and participated in the YLD Geshet leadership program. She has served on numerous JUF committees and commissions, and currently is a local co-chair of the National Young Leadership Cabinet. Kirsch has been named to the 2015 YLD/Oy!Chicago annual "36 under 36" list.

Teplitsky, 35, currently is campaign chair for the JUF Trades, Industries and Professions Financial Services Division. He has been a member of the YLD Board, and served as the 2012 campaign chair. He has participated on numerous JUF

committees and commissions, and is a local co-chair for the National Young Leadership Cabinet. An emigrant from the Former Soviet Union, Teplitsky has provided a distinctive perspective to the JUF-Kiev Kehilla Committee, on which he served.

As part of the Davis, Gidwitz & Glasser Award, the honorees are given the opportunity to attend the annual General Assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America, which this year takes place in Washington, D.C., in November.

Two exceptional young professionals who have shown outstanding performance in their work at a Jewish agency in the Chicago area will receive the Samuel A. Goldsmith Award, now in its 28th year. This year's award will be presented to Faryn Kates Rudnick and Rachel Shtern.

Rudnick, 33, has been cantor at Temple Beth-El, Northbrook, since 2013. In addition, she initiated a congregational Disability Awareness Program. Under Rudnick's leadership, Temple Beth-El has been recognized by the Union of Reform Judaism as an exemplar congregation for its work in inclusion. She is the incoming president of the Reform Cantors of Chicago, and a member of the American Conference of Cantors social action committee. She has chaired the Hebrew Union College Day of Learning, and co-led a workshop on inclusion at the annual ACC convention this year. She represents the ACC on the Jewish Disabilities Network, is a member of the JUF Synagogue Federation Commission's Inclusion Program Planning Committee, and has been a presenter for the Union for Reform Judaism's inclusion initiative.

Shtern, 34, is assistant director of Community Building and Jewish Continuity at the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago, where she focuses on Jewish and day school education. She has fostered a culture of trust between JUF and day school staff and lay leadership, and is exploring development of a Day School Business Managers Cohort. In addition, she has introduced operational and evaluation improvements to the Community Foundation for Jewish Education Ta'am Yisrael eighth-grade Israel program.

The Federation's Annual Meeting begins with a business meeting at 10 a.m., followed by a noon luncheon.

The business meeting, open to all Federation members, will feature the election of directors, and presentations to outgoing board members and the recipients of the young leadership awards.

The lunch session will feature Lipstadt's speech, the annual State of the Federation report, and presentation of the Rosenwald Award to Horwich.

<http://www.juf.org/news/local.aspx?id=435995>

[F Toben comments: Prof Lipstadt is famous for claiming there is no debate about the Holocaust. She could then not understand that she thereby denies basic democratic principles by denying anyone the right to ask questions! – and this from an academic!]